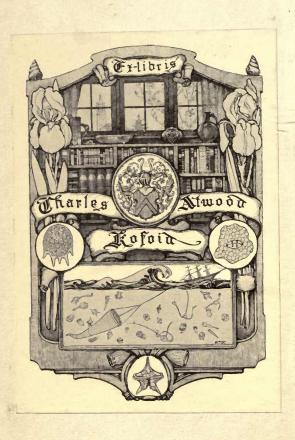


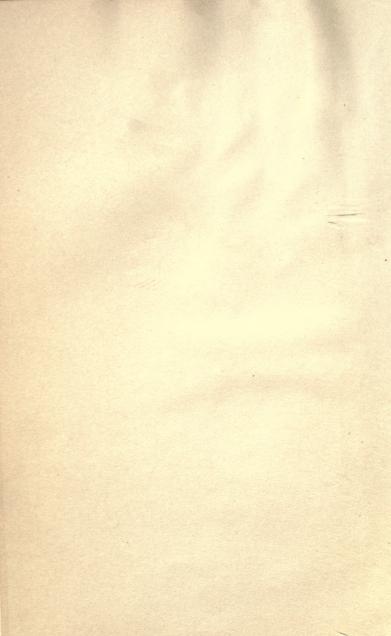
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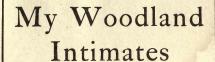


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By

EFFIE BIGNELL

Author of "Mr. Chupes and Miss Jenny"



Dew Bork

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To

My Sister Henriette Eugénie



FOREWORD

In mind all to whom such simple thoughts and quiet experiences might appeal, but my dearest hope has been that, to some one in sick room or city pent, these pages might perhaps carry restful little messages from "God's out-of-doors," or pleasing suggestions of woodland friends; and sharing the thought of one who pleads for the cultivation of sweet herb gardens that through them pleasure may be given to "eyes debarred from any sight of beauty," * I should be glad to think that among these little records there may be found pictures which can be seen by sightless eyes.

"The grove" is a real place; a goodly heritage that adjoins our own modest estate. Through its refreshing paths we may wander at will, and within its precincts are to be found simple de-

* Mrs. Alice Morse Earle, in Old-Time Gardens.

FOREWORD

lights beyond reckoning. No harassing thoughts of taxes, repairs or property expenditures of any kind disturb the serenity of our minds concerning the enchanted region on whose borders we dwell, for such responsibilities and inconveniences belong to so-called actual ownership and residence, and we hold of the grove only "A Rambler's Lease."

It is through this quiet, secluded, eastern New Jersey haunt and its immediate neighborhood, that I ask you to stroll with me now and then, as the months succeed each other and our feathered visitors come and go. Occasionally, as we rest or saunter, you will permit me to relate to you incidents that concern a wider range of territory, and for our closing interview I would transport you to a beloved nook among the Laurentian Mountains of Canada: a blessed spot where the noisy voice of progress has not yet been heard, and where nature speaks without let or hindrance.

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August Moods and Contrasts

"Woods that wear a garb of summer green;
Knee-deep ferns, and nooks of shady stillness."
WILLIAM LEIGHTON.



has its own peculiar charm. There is in each of its curves a suggestion of mystery, as well as a promise of revelation, and one is lured ever onward in the eager desire to see the blessed vision which may be awaiting one just beyond the next enticing bend. But for the lover of nature the fascination does not cease even when the path has been explored and its waywardness learned by heart; for surprises are certain to come with each wending of the way, and an ever-deepening sense of

I think it must be some subtle recognition of this fact which causes me to turn instinctively into this narrow, shady, unmolested, and apparently

friendship—of kinship, I might say—is established between the familiar things along the route

and the one who loves and haunts it.

interminable path, in preference to the broad, well-kept avenue which unfolds its entire length before us as we stand under the sentinel pines at the entrance to the grove. For unless darkness encompasses the winding way, or snow-drifts block its passage, I seldom lose an opportunity of wandering through it.

You will find the paths feather-strewn and the grove comparatively silent to-day, for this is the height of the trying moulting season, and few of our little friends have the courage to sing while the change of raiment is being made. Now and then you may hear the brave song-sparrow's inspiring hymn, or the happy little indigo bunting's rhapsody; and the joyous goldfinch carols merrily, and the pewee's plaint has lost none of its early summer sweetness. Occasionally the crude, uncertain notes of a beginner fall upon your ear, and again you hear an attempt pathetically suggestive of a passé tenor or a worn-out baritone, but with these exceptions the great bird orchestra is silent, and the little feathered friends keep themselves in hiding much of the time.

Far beyond, where this winding path meets the old-fashioned garden, the music of the fountain may be heard; and, in its near neighborhood, AUGUST MOODS AND CONTRASTS

trickles the shallow little stream which here and there widens out into bathing-places for the birds. All through the day thirsty little feathered visitors find refreshment in these waters, and even at dusk they may still be seen taking cooling plunges and preening ragged plumage.

On this still, intense August day how welcome the shelter of these arching, interlacing boughs and the comparative coolness of the forest! Hardy flowers are drooping by the way-side, stout-hearted trees furl their thirsty leaves, willows trail their boughs through tepid water-courses, and out in the open stretches, where the sun beats pitilessly down, one can see the breath of the heated earth as it rises in thin, tremulous waves from the parched surface.

Let us rest here under these hospitable pines. Their delicate, all-pervading fragrance is at its very best in such an atmosphere as this; but what a terrible amount of heat is represented by this superlatively successful extraction of the delicious aroma.

There is at least one little creature, however, to whom the scorching day brings bliss unalloyed. Listen to the loud, penetrating, crescendo drum-

ming of the harvest-fly: the locust, as he is usually miscalled.

"I love he-e-e-e-e-e-e-eat! I love he-e-e-e-e-eat!" he huskily trills in his glee. The voice of August par excellence is he.

Do you see that muddy, empty, beetle-like case clinging to the tree-trunk beside you? Or rather do you see the dozens of phantom-like shells, each with a tell-tale opening in its back? In obedience to the summons of the mysterious law of life, these sluggish creatures recently made their way up from the subterranean homes where they had dwelt for three years or more. Through little tunnels of their own excavating they emerged into the light; then slowly toiled up the tree-trunks, where they halted and awaited the great transformation.

I witnessed the marvel an evening or so ago. First came the little split in the upper part of the shell; then through this tiny door emerged gradually a head, shoulders, folded-up wings, and finally an entire body. The harvest-fly, mature, complete, but needing still a few minutes in which to face life, to get its bearings, and to let its compressed members expand. One little instant after the full-fledged fly had stepped out of its

shell no power on earth could have returned it in safety to the small dingy house it had just left. In an incredibly short space of time it had entered into the joys of existence in a new and higher sphere, and, with hundreds of happy companions, it was drumming out its ecstasy.

And now the little life-cycle begins anew. A sharp incision is made by the parent in a twig or branch, and in this little niche the egg is deposited. Here the offspring remains until it springs to the ground in its first stage of activity. Next comes the journey into the heart of the earth, and the life of darkness and mystery begins. But it is only for a time, for at the appointed season the mature insect will emerge into the light and life of the upper world, and the outgrown shell will be cast aside.

The cicada chorus is composed of male voices only, for the female is the silent partner. No resounding instrument falls to her portion, though the male is furnished with a strange attachment called a drum; a scale-like structure which he wears underneath and which he has power to trill and snap at will.

There was a certain old Greek philosopher, of whom the majority of us would probably never

have heard but for his oft-quoted and not overchivalrous couplet:

> Happy the cicadas' lives, Since they all have voiceless wives.

Was it the presence of a shrew in his own household or the sharp tongue of a neighbor's wife that evoked the cynical exclamation?

Now and then the song breaks off with a spluttering, crackling expostulation, which probably represents the cicada's last words; for the indications are that his enemy has found him and that his singing days are ended.

I thought it an act of neighborly kindness when I first caught sight of a cicada making its way along through the air with a sand-hornet on its back, but a little observation revealed the fact that the hornet was the transporter and the cicada the transported; for when the hornet captures a cicada it is his custom to sting the insect into helplessness, in order to carry it to an underground storehouse prepared for its reception by the sand-hornet or "digger-wasp" itself. But the provisionroom is intended to serve as a nursery also; as, when the hornet has safely stowed away its victim, it deposits a single egg on the prey and gives

AUGUST MOODS AND CONTRASTS

itself no further concern as to the future of the offspring. By means of the strange poison in the sand-hornet's sting, animation is indefinitely suspended in the cicada, and whenever the wasp larva hatches, it finds itself in the midst of a supply of living food.

With what eagerness memory seizes upon even the slightest available happening of the present to forge new links in the chain of the past. A crow flies over the hemlock, at whose base you note a little scattering of pebbles, and straightway an August memory of a dozen or more years ago presents itself before me in its most minute details. It is no story, hardly an incident; not much more than a picture, indeed.

I go back in remembrance to a time when we were summering in a beautiful, remote quarter among northern mountains; a region where August seldom makes even an attempt at dog-days, and where, on the occasion of which I would tell you, though the month was no older than the one upon which we have entered, each breath brought with it such a sense of exhilaration as is known to us here only on bracing autumn days.

With a little country-loving lad from the town and our faithful four-footed follower, a midget

"King Charlie," I wended my way along a mountain-side road. We belonged to an honorable band of foragers who had been despatched in all directions in search of food; for certain promised and greatly needed supplies had been detained on the way and could not reach us until the following morning. One of the foragers shouldered his fishing-rod and went in quest of the jewel-bedecked trout with which the lake and the small streams of the neighborhood were stocked. A little company of two or three made their way to the tract where the raspberry bushes flourished among the charred remains of fire-rayaged forest-trees. Others pushed on through the bear-haunted bush to the one little store of the entire region; while still other foragers, not among the food-providers, but public benefactors nevertheless, dragged from near-by forest recesses the fragrant balsam fir boughs, which were to blaze and snap and crackle on the great hearthstone of our camping-house dining-room, and bid a merry defiance to the cool August evening of the mountains.

The little boy and I were bound for a farmhouse some two miles distant from our camping quarters, the charge entrusted to us being to obAUGUST MOODS AND CONTRASTS

tain a generous supply of luscious cream for which this particular dairy was, and is still, famous.

How refreshing is even the thought of that walk! Down below at the mountain's base the beautiful lake rippled and danced, and now and then from some occupant of a boat speeding over the sparkling waters a greeting was wafted to us travellers on the highway. But apart from this we saw no one, and only at certain outlook points did we catch glimpses of distant dwellings. Yet for all this we were not lonely, nor were we alone indeed; for friendly wayside trees caressed us as we passed, golden-rods and asters greeted us familiarly, delicate ferns looked out approvingly from their cool, moist haunts, strands of the beautiful prince's pine crept to the forest's edge and welcomed us right royally, while from scarlet pigeon-berries and other little floral folk of the wood came friendly glances and salutes; and suddenly, with a loud, urgent cawing, an imperious "wait for me," a glossy crow came sailing over the treetops and alighted on the little boy's hat.

Everyone at the settlement knew and loved Corny, as this sable intimate was named. Through an accident in his babyhood he came into

the possession of a kind-hearted little country lad, who ministered so successfully to the wounded bird that he recovered entirely from his injuries. When old enough to fly Corny was given his freedom, but his love for and trust in humankind led him to seek their society rather than that of his fellows. He would fly from house to house of the settlement, receiving at each of his stopping-places a welcome and a repast, unless—as sometimes happened—his loud caw made itself heard as early as three or four in the morning, on which occasions we tried to turn a deaf ear to his appeals.

He was an eminently sociable fellow, and frequently, when he saw his human friends starting out for a walk, the fancy would take him to accompany them. Sometimes he would fly a little in advance of the pedestrians, again he would linger behind to investigate wayside charms or exchange greetings with feathered acquaintances, while often, as on the present occasion, he would elect to make the journey on the hat of one of his friends.

The picture that memory conjures up for me to-day is of this little company of four, wending their way along the mountain-side road. There is nothing to tell of adventure by the way. We were successful in our quest, and returned when the valleys were purpling and the golden lights lingering on the hill-tops only. The other foragers had arrived in advance of us—I must confess that we loitered by the way—and the royal feast awaited us. With appetites whetted to the keenest edge we sat down to the savory viands, and I venture to say that never was imperial banquet the equal of this mountain repast of our own serving and providing.

Next came the blissful, dreamy hour in the firelight glow, and the happy day was ended.

And now for the link between this August memory and the little scattering of pebbles at the foot of the hemlock yonder. Under those stones of remembrance the beloved little spaniel sleeps, having lived out the measure of her happy life. You know now why a crow flying above the little grave brought the friendly Corny to my thoughts.

Poor Corny! Fate was less kind to him than to the little dog. One morning, when a party of so-called sportsmen arrived at our settlement, the poor fellow took his last journey. He was on his usual larder-visiting tour, and he turned out

of his way to investigate the new-comers. He had never met with unkind treatment, and, in this instance as usual, looked only for a welcome, so he flew directly to the men, when one of them raised his gun and shot the friendly fellow.

We picked him up cold and stiff and buried him among the beloved scenes, and ever since the day of his death we have wondered how anyone could so treacherously reward even the trust of a crow.

The hours have sped unheeded as we mused and talked, and now all the time-pieces of Arden tell of declining day. Shadows are lengthening, flocks of grackles and other rovers are making their homeward way, other little feathered friends are mounting to their sleeping apartments, and voices that have been silent through the day are now heard in eager chatter. Listen to the commotion in the tree-tops. What is it all about? Quarrels over the selection of the most advantageous places? Reproofs and discipline for deeds of trespass? "Tut, tut, tut," says the liquid-voiced wood-thrush, as if in gentle expostulation.

The glow in the western sky is paling rap-

AUGUST MOODS AND CONTRASTS

idly. The refreshing night dews are already falling. Except for an occasional sleepy remonstrance all will soon be quiet in the tree-tops. The cicada is no longer heard, but other voices are now taking up the song of the woods. Do you hear the *cree*, *cree*, *cree* of the cricket, and the penetrating call of the tree-toad? And hark! the net-veined katydid is rapidly chirring out her

Brek-ek-ek-ex, Life is complex.

While the true katydid, solemn, slow, and distinct, is telling dwellers in lands a little north of us that winter's herald—the frost—may be expected to paint the trees and nip the flowers in about six weeks.

Frost! Is it possible that the Ice-King will ever again wave his sceptre over this summerland?

The leaves and branches are outlined on the ground in silver now, and the fairy tracery sways in the evening wind as the beautiful moon looks down through the tree-tops. Only night influences are at work; let us go. In the grove the day is done.



Good-by to Summer

"The year smiles as it draws near its death."
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.



A UGUST overran her latest boundaries by at least two weeks, after which October sent out an advance cluster of days; but at last all intruders are routed and September enters triumphantly, though tardily, upon her legal inheritance.

Do you remember the feather-strewn condition of these paths as we strolled through them a month ago? The wind and the gardener's rake have long since removed all moulting evidences, but a picturesque disorder of another kind prevails; for nature has begun her autumn grand ménage, and this first scattering of the leaves represents the opening of the gigantic undertaking.

At the season of farewells she is particularly partial to brilliant effects, as you see by these occasional gay evidences among the shrubs and

trees. But they are only preparatory touches, mere indications of what is to come; for, with the march of autumn, one summer decoration after another will take on glowing tints; and thus the radiance will grow until the gay season closes and the dead leaves flutter to the ground.

A few weeks hence the summer trees will stand thoroughly denuded, but no wholesale disrobing awaits the evergreens. Portions of their old coat have grown brown and are dropping off, but the new growth, that in the spring and early summer was of so tender a hue, has gone on darkening, until at last it has the appearance of rich green velvet, as it proudly matches itself against the dying foliage of the summer trees.

Yes, autumn has come! Even if you close your eyes, scent and hearing still testify unmistakably to the fact. The fragrance of mellow leaves, of late flowers, and of dead-ripe fruits, and the rallying calls of feathered leaders eager to marshal their forces and to set out on their southern expeditions—these are all distinctively autumn indications.

Several bird families have already left us, and others are on the eve of departure. In this beautiful secluded corner a pair of wood-thrushes

GOOD-BY TO SUMMER

have held a perpetual At Home from early in the season. It is just the wild, unmolested spot to take the fancy of those ardent wood-lovers. Broken boughs have piled themselves up undisturbed under the interlocking branches from which they fell, and moist, rich leaf-mold, boasting of layers and layers, generations and generations of decay, mats itself around the deeply shaded tree-bases. Think of the luscious larder this represents!

Ever since the early summer day when the wonderful four-fold note, echoing and re-echoing through these green aisles, announced the arrival of the gentle visitors, I have haunted the spot. The little foragers soon learned to know me, and even during nesting-time they did not resent my presence. With the instinct of true hospitality they allowed me to follow my own devices while they pursued their daily avocations, and in this way they made me feel, not like an intruder, but as if I were one of the family. Would that our well-meaning but alas too often over-zealous human hosts could learn from these little beings the secret of successful entertainment.

It is with a dread of finding the wood-thrush corner deserted that I visit it nowadays. "The

little friends have taken their departure at last," I say to myself if I do not sight them speedily. But they are still here. Do you see the soft brown backs and the lovely dotted breasts in the pile of brush yonder? In and out, in and out among the broken boughs they come. "Such a gentle, high-bred air [the wood-thrush] has, and such inimitable composure in his flight and movement! Was he a prince in the olden time, and do the regal grace and mien still adhere to him in his transformation?"*

If by any chance the little friends are not to be found here I look for them just over the way where that tall, graceful Norway spruce sweeps the ground. They are generally in the act of swallowing some wriggling dainty as they emerge from under the upward curving branches, for the beautiful Norway spruce guards a fine grub and insect preserve.

Now let us stroll on toward the open grassy stretches. On their borders, as if not quite certain of an invitation to closer intimacy and ready to retire to the woods in case of a rebuff, stands an array of little wild asters; the good-by to summer, as the flower is called in lands of early

^{*} Mr. John Burroughs, in Wake Robin.

winters. September evidences indeed are these, but if you would see hosts of such come with me to the most remote part of the grove—the portion overlooking the river—and take a peep at the meadows visible from that point.

In the general blending of color you may not be able to distinguish all the varieties of plant-life represented; but the troops, the armies of asters -white, lavender, and purple-are recognizable in their abundance. Clusters of red-brown sumach berries are peeping out from their radiant foliage setting; milkweed pods are opening to release their shimmering contents, and groups of wild-mustard plants nod cheerily toward beds of chicory. Little wild sunflowers-Clyties in disguise, it is whispered, following the course of the beloved sun-god-scarlet hawthorn berries, tasselled golden-rods, gorgeous iron weeds, belated daisies, stray dandelions, aggressive Scotch thistles -some still purple-crowned, others in the brown and desolate seed-shedding state—pert little clusters of "butter and eggs," yellow-buttoned groups of tansy, bouncing Bets, classical varrows, and even the despised burdocks-all have their place in the September procession.

Across the river you see what is usually sup-

posed to be the completion of a picture of this kind. A sportsman emerging from the cover of the trees; and, in advance of him, coming occasionally to view among the long meadow grasses, a dog in eager search of the little being whose happy world darkened with that sudden flash from the gun.

I spent a delightful hour yesterday afternoon under that old locust-tree on the far river-bank. For some reason or other—an abundance of grub and insect life, probably—it is an extremely popular haunt just now. While I watched, woodpeckers of two or three varieties busily investigated its trunk; flycatchers made lightning-like sallies and lunges at small winged prey in its neighborhood; worm-eating warblers—their little striped heads coming constantly to view during the conscientious journeys—went carefully from leaf to leaf, scrutinizing each possible lurking-place of vegetation enemies; and up aloft, forming a sort of exclusive haute société, was a company of bluebirds.

The locust-tree had many other visitors that afternoon—shy little creatures that kept well in the sheltering arms of the branches while I watched, and took their departure from the side

opposite my outlook point; but suppose we were to base a calculation only on the presence of the birds that I could enumerate, would our combined knowledge of mathematics enable us to estimate the amount of plant and tree destruction which that one busy hour's work has prevented?

What beautiful harmony exists ever between earth and sky! What sympathy with each other's moods! Watch those great, soft, dreamylooking clouds as they float along in their majestic whiteness. How near they seem compared with the remoteness of the blue depths, yet how distant, how vast in its solitude, is even the nearest point of the heavens.

Ah, here is one of the beautiful rewards of looking up! See that flock of wild geese far overhead, making their way southward by the course of the very river near whose banks we stand. They are silent just now; each long neck is stretched forward to its fullest extent; each pair of wings sways in perfect measure with every other pair. A geometrical figure in motion, one might say, so perfectly is the outline of the triangle preserved even in flight. What body of trained soldiery could move with greater regularity or precision than do these winged troops!

Now they are but faint specks on the distant horizon, and now, like creatures conjured up to invite sleep, they fade away in the dreamy distance, and the sky again seems vast, untenanted, and remote. But who can tell how many winged travellers, either silent or too far away for their voices to reach us, have passed our way this very afternoon, all unsuspected by us? Perhaps even as we stood here, giving utterance to our small impressions and opinions, they were looking down upon us from their great, solemn heights.

What wonderful beings birds are! Earth, tree-tops, and sky are at their service, and, for some of their number, even surging waves make a safe resting-place and deep snows a warm covering. How pitiful and small and labored do even the swiftest and most extensive of our voyages seem in comparison with the free, untrammelled journeyings of these "brothers of the air."

A toilsome ascent of a mountain may open up to us such glorious vistas as our lowland minds never conceived, but what are the views that greet our wondering eyes compared with the sights upon which the winged traveller gazes as he wends his way on his marvellous and momen-

GOOD-BY TO SUMMER

tous migration journeys? And he sees, not from one outlook post merely, but with an ever-changing point of view. He looks upon the earth, not from earthly heights, but from the standpoint of the heavens. The sky, no longer distant and unfathomable, admits him to the intimacy of its heart.

Yet, even were it granted to us to gaze from a standpoint in space representing the most advantageous height these feathered travellers can reach, we should view nothing like the expanse visible to a bird's eyes, with their wonderful side range of vision and their marvellous telescopic powers. Yet we speak with authority of "bird's-eye views," and even attempt their representation!

But let us turn again to the homely, familiar scenes of the grove. With our feet still planted on the friendly earth, the sky, beautiful as it is to contemplate, seems vast and strange for habitation. We may gaze wonderingly and reverently into its glorious depths, but earth is home to us now.

We return just in time to catch a glimpse of the beautiful red-headed woodpecker. What a

striking costume he wears; dazzling blacks and whites and reds. These brilliant creatures are becoming quite numerous in the neighborhood of the grove.

Now for a look at the bird-baths. This stream was well patronized a month ago, but visitors are comparatively rare now; nevertheless we may surprise a stray bather or two. I occasionally see small companies of thrushes, robins, and grackles taking hasty plunges, but there is no such luxurious lingering as at the time of overwhelming heat.

A few days ago, during a season of August encroachment. I came upon a water-thrush here. The dainty little sprite was busily hunting along that decayed log, now and then darting above it in pursuit of winged insects; but when his hunger was appeased, thoughts of toilet-making entered his mind and he flew to the bath. For a moment the dipping tail and speckled breast were buried in the water, while a delicate spray was tossed over the olive-green back. Then my dainty little visitor emerged and disappeared in a leafy dressing-room. During migrating periods members of his family occasionally halt in the grove for refreshments. I saw two of the graceful lit-

tle creatures in the garden near the currant bushes an afternoon or so ago.

My presence did not disturb them in the least, and their greetings were of the friendliest, even though I ventured within two feet of them.

There is a pretty sight. These lovely little birds opening and closing their yellow-bordered tails are redstarts, or yellow-tailed warblers, and yonder are several others of their kind.

Birds are not numerous in this locality, but I can conduct you to a most popular September rendezvous. It was fairly thronged before nipping nights came; but owing to the fact that some of the habitués have left for the south, the Wild Cherry Tree Café is not quite so extensively patronized as it was a few days ago.

Approach quietly if you would have full benefit of the frequenters' natural and unrestrained conversation. I have often heard its counterpart among eager human berry or cherry pickers.

Listen to the delightful commotion. Utterance is impeded by large and frequent bites, but the eloquence of the exclamations is only emphasized by these interruptions.

There is an aerial sparring match; the outcome

of a dispute over a particularly luscious morsel perhaps. A worm-flavored cherry, for instance; or is it a quarrel regarding boundary lines and right-of-way questions? Whatever the cause of the contention, that feathered philosopher who has just alighted at the scene of the dispute is determined to turn the occasion to his own advantage. Note the business-like way in which he proceeds to dispose of the fruit which the combatants have deserted in order to settle the quarrel.

The orchard represents one large cider-press, and nearly every windfall apple and pear is a wasp table d'hôte. Beware, step cautiously, for each of the bodies now swaying in ecstasy carries a sharp weapon for the punishment of trespassers.

Jolly golden pumpkins peer gayly out from among their cornstalk wigwams, and long lines of celery rise prosperously from newly raised intrenchments. The asparagus is decked in delicate green feathers and scarlet berries, and the parsley leaves are crimped to perfection. Corpulent beets, golden carrots, purple egg-plants, plebeian turnips, argus-eyed potatoes—representatives of the entire kitchen-garden tribe, in fact, appear at this horn-of-plenty scene.

You notice that the chorus of insects is scarcely

heard now, though a few small voices still pipe at sunset. This morning I watched a little community of crickets as they drowsily emerged from the long grass heavy with frosty moisture. They already feel the influence of Nature's autumn lullaby, and in a short time they will fall asleep, an occasional one only to awaken in the spring. All the summer jousts and tournaments are forgotten now, and the pugnacious little creatures, who have perhaps slaughtered thousands of their kind at some Ashby-de-la-Zouche, are gentle with the docility that comes with numbness.

Spiders are spinning their fairy coverlets and late caterpillars are hastening to wrap themselves up in their cocoons. The only one of their kind who would seem to run no cold-taking risks at this season is that cosey-looking fellow in the redbrown coat with the black velvet tips. He is speeding briskly enough on his way now, but at our slightest touch he would halt and curl himself up into a plush ball.

Do you feel the sudden chill? Those goldenleaved maples—the first of the grove-trees to succumb to autumnal influences—have misled us with a "sunshine of their own." But look through the trees westward, at the crimson glory

on the horizon. What old-world "rose-window" can compare in beauty with that glow! But there is no mistaking the hour it indicates. Already the glory is fleeting and the damp shadows are falling. If we were busily digging like vonder industrious robins, we might possibly combat the autumn chill. The little creatures have evidently determined to utilize every scrap of the shortened day. For us, however, no such necessity exists, and we would do well to seek the home shelter. With departing day the delusive brightness and color vanish, and in the twilight gloom of late September we are brought face to face with the fact that the life and gladness of summer have departed, and that the brilliant pageant for which we have seen the earliest preparations is none other than a funeral in disguisethe funeral of the year.

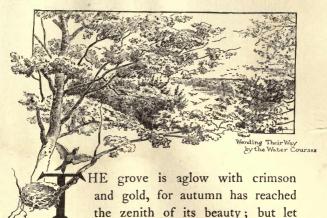


"Then followed the beautiful season; Called by the pious Acadian peasants the Summer of All-Saints.

Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light; and the landscape

Lay as if new-created in all the freshness of childhood."

Longfellow.



us make the most of this wonderful hour, for the decline is at hand. There can be no tarrying on Transfiguration Mounts.

See the burnished lights of that beautiful copper beach and the crimson tints of this grand old oak. Here stands a golden maple dashed with scarlet, and there one in robes of flame with touches of gold. Is it with a view of emphasizing the beauties of each of these autumn glories that nature has allowed this intermediate maple to retain its midsummer color and vigor?

Last night, when the moonlight bathed the grove as the sunshine floods it now, there was vouchsafed to those who trod these transfigured paths the sight of such a radiance as, in the days

of prophetic revelation, might have ushered in a vision of the very Presence itself. In that glorified atmosphere the trees that are now ablaze with the brilliant, tangible colors of earth were luminous with a strange, mystical glow—a light as from the unseen world. Even the darkest firs shone with the dazzling whiteness, but upon the great solemn pines—the forest's high-priests—rested the light of the holy of holies. With one of old we felt as if, caught up into paradise, we were listening to "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Yet upon our mortal ears fell no sound save that of the wind, as it softly swayed the lustrous pine plumes and gently caressed the dying leaves.

The green of the honeysuckle is still undimmed, you note—it will hold its own for many a day to come—and the green of the stately English ivy only grows darker and richer with the advance of autumn; but at Jack Frost's free-and-easy touch deep blushes creep over the woodbine, and the blackberry vines wreathe themselves in glowing crimson.

In the garden, troops of chrysanthemums still defy him, and, in spite of his nipping night breath, frail, delicately tinted, star-like flowers

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sway serenely at the tips of long, graceful cosmos branches. Hardy geraniums are sturdily sending out late blossoms, while dahlias, zinnias, China asters, marigolds, ladies' slipper, larkspur, nasturtiums, and sweet alyssum make a brave show of resisting frosty influences; but all the tenderer flowers are dead, and darkened, drooping stalks mark their graves.

In this locality October is, par excellence, the month of brilliant contrasts, but I doubt if you have ever seen a greater than the one that awaits us at the turning of this path. Here we come upon a community of hemlocks, and, hidden deep in the heart of this exclusive circle, dwells a beautiful, shy woodbine. No one noted its progress as it crept up through the evergreen branches, but one morning, as if at the touch of a magician's wand, flaming garlands and crimson festoons swayed triumphantly among the dark tree-tops, and radiant suspension bridges swung from one high, graceful branch to another. Not a hint or a suggestion do you see down below of the splendor that breaks upon the heads of these forest monarchs. The lavish outburst was all reserved for their crowns.

Let us turn into this sequestered hedge-lane.

At its terminus we come upon another instance of a vine and tree alliance. Here honeysuckle arms encircle and weigh down an entire peartree. It is slowly dying in their embrace; but even in its apparently missed vocation, what a wide sphere of usefulness it has, and how much symmetry and beauty result from the thwarting of its life-plan. For the dead and dying branches are the supports on which the green canopy rises and the fragrant blossoms rest, and to the vine-covered boughs are confided the beautiful secrets of many a precious bird-home.

Step into the little arbor which the strange union forms, and look up among the vine tangles at the nests which have been built in this sheltered maze. This is a robin and catbird co-operative establishment. Here, during nesting-times, representatives of both families dwell happily side by side; and in the kindergarten of the old pear-tree, all the robin and catbird youngsters of the arbor receive their Froebel preparation for life's harder lessons.

I have often heard that cathirds act as valuable sentries among their feathered neighbors, and opportunities for verifying this statement have been numerous during my visits to the pear-tree

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colony. Anxious, indignant meows are heard whenever danger threatens the little community, and at the first note of alarm a nervous terror seems to take possession of all the menaced creatures. Sometimes the panic is caused by the sight of a serenely soaring hawk, or the stealthy approach of a cat. Again it may be the discovery of a drowsy little screech-owl, with its glassy stare and its wooden countenance, that causes the violent tail-switching and pitiful mewing of the catbird.

I remember well one June morning when the wildest commotion was taking place around a certain tree where I suspected the screech-owl's presence. Two of his kind had halted on our veranda in the twilight of the preceding evening, and some hours later their ghostly laughter came back to us from the dark recesses of the grove. So, on the morning in question, following the catbird's lead, I went to the site of the disturbance with a well-founded expectation of what I was to find; yet it was only after much searching and prying that I discovered the little owl, having several times mistaken him for a part of his immediate surroundings. The catbird's threatening tones and manner finally routed the intruder,

and he flew noiselessly away, probably with the intention of resuming his nap in quieter regions.

I heard a rustle among the vines then: let us see what it means. Ah, it is a member of the very vigilance committee in question; a catbird with whom we are on terms of great intimacy. He is one of a friendly band which follows us from tree to tree, but none of his companions carry their fearlessness to quite such lengths as does this bright-eyed little fellow. There is no remonstrance, you see, although my hand is now within two or three inches of his pretty, gray coat. Is not such confidence delightful!

You probably wonder what induces him to linger around the summer-home when all the other members of his family have departed. Has he missed his train, or his party rather, and is he too exclusive to attach himself to any other company, even though its members may not belong to his own particular set?

We flatter ourselves that affection for his human friends is one of the influences at work in the matter of his prolonged stay; yet we must acknowledge that this consideration is only a secondary one, and that a deep-rooted regard for the material benefits accruing to him from the

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acquaintance stands foremost among actuating causes.

This catbird has a history. No doubt the same assertion might be made with regard to every other inmate of the grove, but unusual opportunities have put us in possession of the facts in his case. Early in the season he was picked up wounded, the victim of a successfully aimed slingshot in all probability. Gasping and bleeding, he was taken to the *Hôtel des Invalides*—a cold grapery that has harbored many a wounded member of the furred and feathered tribes; a crystal palace from whose hospitable shelter many a grateful little convalescent has gone forth to take up anew the life so cruelly interrupted.

Here it was the cathird learned to know and love the people of the grove, for here it was that his wounds were bathed and dressed, and every wise and loving attention bestowed upon him. At first he received human advances timidly, but after a time he learned to revel in the privileges of invalidism; and finally, like many a being reckoned far above him in the scale of development, he became very exacting and seemed to demand, as his due, all the attention which he at first received with such touching humility. But the ex-

action that would be unbearable in a human being is only captivating and amusing in a bird, and we love the little fellow in spite of his domineering ways.

It was during his stay in the infirmary that he acquired the banana habit; a taste that has ever since been respected by his admirers. Indeed there is a certain old tree remnant known as "the banana stump," where samples of the tropical dainty daily await the ex-invalid. I think it must have been the evident relish with which he ate that first attracted the wood-thrushes, robins, and red squirrels to the spot. At any rate, claimants for the banana of discord are now numerous, and the once peaceable stump has been transformed into a seat of war.

Over in yonder weedy section I see a busy community of sparrows. The heads that lift at our approach disclose the white throats which make identification such an easy matter, for these are the white-throated sparrows. Now that they have satisfied their curiosity regarding us they fall to work again, and, although the distance between them and us is rapidly diminishing, they continue their weed-seed gathering as unconcernedly as though we were not present. Surely this

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great confidence results from the fact that the catbird or some other grove representative has vouched for our respectability. I cannot help thinking that this is the case, for migrating birds, when halting in the grove, seem to share the confidence of season or permanent dwellers, although at a few feet from the enclosure they may manifest much timidity.

Let us make an observation halt under this old apple-tree. Not that it promises immediate revelations, but bark and leaf inspectors are certain to come this way shortly. In out-door researches one often gains more by simply standing still than by covering much ground in active investigation. "One cannot run and read the book of nature."

We have not had long to wait, you see, for there is an arrival already. Nothing very distinctive or distinguished about the appearance of the little brown bird, but perhaps he is travelling incognito. So many feathered tourists don disguising costumes at this season.

Now he halts as if for a leisurely survey of the bark territory that he is facing, and now he lowers his wings; and in this action we have the clue to his identity and the reward of patient watching. For the drooping wings bring to view a yel-

low mark at the base of his tail, enabling us to recognize him as the myrtle or yellow-rumped warbler. Quite a change from the costume in which he passed us on his northward journey a few months ago. All his colors are subdued now, with the exception of this bright spot at the base of the tail.

If the fancy takes this little fellow he may remain in the grove throughout the entire winter, for he is one of the feathered folk whose food does not depend altogether on warm weather conditions, and a fine crop of his favorite dainties—the bayberries—awaits him here this year.

But the myrtle warbler is no longer the only visitor at the old apple-tree. Several of his own family have joined him and now still other foragers are flitting about among the skeletonized leaves that sway and rustle on the old tree. The destructive fall web worm has passed this way and perhaps some of the pupæ still lodge in the folded-over recesses of the leaves; but they will hardly escape the vigilant search of our feathered friends. None of the foragers are more active than the golden-crowned kinglets, those dainty little greenish-backed sprites with whitish breasts. Now and then we get glimpses of their prettily

striped heads—golden centres bordered by narrow bands of velvety black—and just then, thanks to the clever acrobatic feat by which one little fellow remained suspended head downward a few seconds, I caught sight of a glowing bit of deep orange in the heart of the golden crown. This last bit of adornment is the distinguishing mark of the male's cap.

Let us loiter a little in the neighborhood of this feu-de-joie. I love the smell of burning brush and leaves; and the fine smoke that rises from these fragrant pyres blends most harmoniously with the delicate haze of our Indian summer atmosphere.

Indian summer! Have you ever heard the red man's story of the origin of the name? It was brought to me from far-off northern lands where the child of the forest still dwells; and with every dreamy, hazy, mellow autumn day it comes to my remembrance anew.

When summer days dawn on the land that for so many long, dark, terrible months has been held in winter's fierce grasp, the Indian—ever child-like and improvident—gives himself up unreservedly to the delights of the genial season. He hunts and fishes as the fancy takes him, but with

no thought of aught beyond the blissful present. And so the days pass, as they do for happy, irresponsible children, and the bright dream is dispelled only when the Indian awakens to the sight of a snow-covered world. The short summer has departed, grim winter is at the door, and he has gathered no store to keep him and his alive through its awful rigors.

But the first snow always melts before the sun, and, even as the rudely awakened Indian smokes and ponders, patches of friendly brown earth reappear, and after a time genial days return. They will be few in number, however. This even he, the child-like red man, realizes, and after them will come no mere flurrying forerunner, but winter—fierce, biting, implacable winter itself.

The Indian heeds the warning, and in the short time of respite he goes eagerly forth to secure his supplies; and this summer aftermath, this time of last opportunities, is called the Indian summer.

And now for another saunter. Let us direct our steps toward yonder wild corner. You recognize it? For me this nook possesses the same sweet, sad charm that lingers around a deserted

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home where dear human friends once dwelt. The wood-thrushes have gone. In spite of scarcity of provisions resulting from the autumn cold, they lingered with us until two days ago. I fancy that they bade adieu with real regret to the spot where they have known such happy sheltered days. Often toward dusk, as we sat quietly on our veranda listening to the twilight voices, there would come to us from this woodland corner all the bed-time chatter of the little wood-thrushes as they advanced from branch to branch. They evidently had the sociable idea of drawing near our neighborhood, and many a time the bright eyes would peep at us from out the leafy coverlets, as if with a real interest in us and an affectionate desire for our companionship. Even when we strolled under the branches where the soft, speckled breasts were visible the trusting little creatures manifested no alarm. Surely in their happy southern haunts they do not lose the remembrance of this waiting forest nook.

I miss the twilight twitter of the chimneyswifts, and it is with a feeling of genuine loneliness that I note the almost universal falling-off, even among the late-stayers' ranks. The first robin flight has left us, yet hosts of the dear red-

breasts still remain. A few days ago I counted nearly three hundred in the circle formed by the carriage drive. But the ranks will soon thin rapidly, for the cheery fellows, as a body, do not remain with us much later.

I heard a great and unmistakable commotion in the tree-tops at daybreak this morning. It was evidently a twenty-minutes-for-refreshments arrangement. There was the rapid, excited chatter of arriving tourists—too much din to permit my unpractised ear to distinguish what families were represented—then a great whirring of wings, and, by the time I was dressed warmly enough to venture out, the tourists were distant specks and the voices inaudible.

But by far the noisiest and largest of all the flights that have come to my notice, was an enormous body of grackles which passed this way yesterday. Shortly before six in the morning I heard a sound as of rain descending in torrents. I went to my window with the expectation of seeing drenched trees and a deluged earth, but lo, all was dry, and in the west were none but fair weather indications. Overhead, however, the sky was black, but with a grackle flight, not threatening clouds. I estimated the number of birds roughly

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—first by batches of tens, then hundreds—and, though my calculation was necessarily very imperfect, I can confidently assert that thousands and thousands passed my way as I gazed.

When the sky was once more clear I withdrew from my window only to hear, a moment or so later, another sound as of a torrent and to see a migrating company of thousands of grackles. Four of these enormous detachments passed in, perhaps, eight or ten minutes; the first somewhat the largest, the remaining three in slightly diminishing ratios.

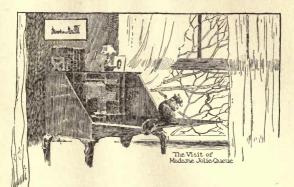
But to see detachments of the great southward-wending feathered procession is now an every-day occurrence. "Night and day, week days and Sundays, they will be flying; now singly or in little groups, and flitting from one wood or pasture to another, now in great companies, and with protracted all-day or all-night flights. Could one ask a better stimulus for his imagination than the annual southing of this mighty host? Each member of it knows his own time and his own course. On such a day the snipe will be in such a meadow and the golden plover in such a field. Some no doubt will lose their way. Numbers uncounted will perish by storm and flood; numbers

more, alas, by human agency. . . . But the army will push on; they will come to their desired haven: for there is a spirit in birds, also, 'and the Almighty giveth them understanding.'"*

* Mr. Bradford Torrey, in The Foot-Path Way.

Gray Days and Merry Ways

"Now goes the golden autumn far away; Now nearer comes the winter to my door."



In the garden are spectral flower-stalks and ghosts of former bloom. On the hill-sides, dreary brown stretches made more dreary and sombre by occasional gayly contrasting patches of vigorous winter wheat. Down in the meadows, low-lying grasses, dead rushes, and denuded shrubs. Along the river-banks, desolate-looking trees waving bare branches against leaden skies. Among the wind-swept pine-tops, a wailing and a moaning like the sobbing of the sea; and through their trunks a solemn sound as of the deep notes of an organ.

No sun—no moon!
No morn—no noon.
No dawn—no dusk—no proper time of day,
No sky—no earthly view,
No distance looking blue,

No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease, No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees, No fruits, no flowers, no birds, no leaves,

November !*

But surely no one within sight or sound of yonder dainty little optimist could possibly echo the poet's mournful sentiments. Gay-gay-gay sings the friendly, light-hearted chickadee, and, as if in response to his cheery call, several of the little black-capped sprites are already hurrying our way. For them this gray day is filled to overflowing with delight.

Perhaps leafless trees, more directly than any other autumnal influences, are responsible for impressions of sadness at this season. Yet bare boughs have their beauties no less than those in full leaf, and one cannot really make the acquaintance of a tree until it has been stripped of its foliage. The beautiful evergreens are conservatives who guard their secrets jealously. There is ever about them a touch of mystery, of solemnity. But an everyday, intimate acquaintance with deciduous trees is possible when nature has laid away their summer wrappings and sent the life-blood to their protected roots. Then

* Thomas Hood, in November

trunks, main branches, and sub-branches, with their infinite variety of extensions, of smaller, finer shoots, offshoots, and terminals, come to view; and the sky, in all its aspects, from the dullest of gray-day effects to the most gorgeous of sunset or sunrise lights, has new meanings when seen through these delicate traceries.

During its denuded state the individuality of a tree is recognized as at no other time; for in riven trunk, seamed bark, and twisted bough, or even in general symmetry of growth, is each history recorded; just as, in human countenances, joys and sorrows, failures and successes leave their imprint and tell life's story.

During leafless seasons there comes to view the tender, delicate green of moss-covered trunks, which is lost in the wealth of summer foliage, and many a forest secret is revealed when boughs are bare. Then, for instance, one is enabled to take a comparatively correct inventory of the habitations that have been built among the branches, and, to the lover of nature, how suggestive, how eloquent is even the very silence of these deserted dwellings!

Even in the dullest of November skies there are sometimes beautiful surprises. Look, for instance,

at that gold-bordered rift in the grayness, where the sun is attempting to peer out at our sombre world. But he is withdrawing already; yet, though the gray curtain hides him once more, the veil is less heavy than it was; and now, as at all times when the sky is visible, we may heighten color effects—the dullest and dimmest as well as the most brilliant—by looking upward from a horizontal point of view. Even if we try the well-known plan of leaning our heads as nearly as possible on our own shoulders, all sorts of hitherto-unnoticed shades and tints will be revealed to us. In nature's realm, as well as elsewhere, there is gain in viewing things from different standpoints.

Here are some engaging little fellows on whose regular autumn appearance we may safely rely. They are juncos, or slate-colored snowbirds, and they come with the intention of remaining until spring. Do you not find their simple costume bewitching? To me they have the appearance of gentle Quakers who have yielded to worldly suggestions to the extent of allowing their garments to be cut in the most elegant and modish manner, all the while adhering strictly to orthodox colors. That remonstrating little st-st is

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no doubt addressed to the English sparrows, with whom they mingle freely throughout the entire season. Here, at least, we have a successful socialistic blending of plebeians and patricians.

I hear a plaintive sound from the river-side region—the meadow-lark's minor notes. The little touch of melancholy harmonizes well with the mood of this gray day; but it is offset by the sight of this handsome sapsucker, not an every-day guest at this season. He is investigating an appletree in the poultry vard. I wonder if he has taken note of Theodore, the magnificent white turkey who was appointed to grace the festal board on Thanksgiving day. You see the proud fellow over in yonder sheltered portion of the yard. Is he not the personification of haughty scorn, as, with arrogantly spread tail, stiffly lowered wings, and neck arched until his bill is almost buried in his beautiful tassel, he proudly stalks around among the awe-stricken fowls and hisses out his disapproval of them all. His death-warrant was signed two or three days ago, but at the moment when the proud head was to have been laid low, the executioner, his heart softened by the creature's extraordinary beauty, begged for a reprieve and suggested a substitute. And thus it comes to

pass that, on the eve of the feast, Theodore still struts triumphantly about the poultry yard, while the virtuous substitute, denuded of his feathers, his wings closely clasped to his sides and his drumsticks folded over his highly seasoned interior, awaits in the cellar of the grove-house the hour when he is to take his place in the roasting pan *en route* for the heated oven.

The friendly cathird still remains, you see. He has just alighted on a bunch of celery that the gardener is carrying to the kitchen. The celery is no doubt one of the accompaniments of the Theodore feast.

Day after day I meet a few song-sparrows over in the sheltering brush-heap near the entrance to the flower-garden. Several of the little fellows are coming our way now, probably in anticipation of the daily seed and grain supply that we scatter in the neighborhood. All our pensioners seem most grateful for attentions of this kind.

That dear little brown sprite with the finely barred coat and the jauntily retroussée tail is a winter wren. How easy it would be to overlook him as he bobs in and out among the bushes. Wonderfully like a bit of his autumn settings is he.

GRAY DAYS AND MERRY WAYS

Listen to the loud, happy, discordant chatter of those busy English sparrows. How self-satisfied they seem! How unconscious of the opprobrium that attaches itself to their very name! Their harsh voices are susceptible of great improvement, it seems, however. Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller relates an instance of a wounded English sparrow who was rescued and placed in a cage in the neighborhood of a canary, and in a short time the little street arab had not only acquired the canary's song, but, in successful rendering and sweetness of voice, he actually surpassed his feathered model. In Mr. Thompson-Seton's "Fifth Avenue Troubadour" we have another instance of an Englishsparrow musician. Who can tell what beneficial results might follow the establishment of avian St. Cecilia societies in English sparrow circles?

Here we come upon a group of cedar-birds. In these beautifully crested, elegantly clad, high-bred little creatures we have the Lord Chester-fields of birds—always on etiquette and never guilty of a breach of good breeding nor of the slightest carelessness in the matter of dress. No one ever came upon them in the déshabille of moulting time, for it is said that they are always in full toilette. Their low, modest notes corre-

spond with the general elegance of their deportment, for they seldom speak loud enough to attract attention.

An idea of their superlative politeness is given in a frequently cited statement made by Nuttall, who tells us that he once saw a little company of cedar-birds passing on, from one to another, an insect that one of them had captured. Each seemed unselfishly anxious that one of his neighbors should have the benefit of the tid-bit.

Not only are they kind and helpful to members of their own family, but several sweet instances of their tender treatment of outsiders have been cited. Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller relates the story of a cedar-bird who fed and cared for a family of orphaned robins until they were old enough to leave the nest.

Add to good looks and amiable qualities the cedar-bird's great usefulness in the matter of destroying hurtful insects, and you will see what desirable visitors they are. Surely one would be ashamed to grudge them the cherry lunch they sometimes take between insect - exterminating raids.

Judging from the quantities of nut-shells strewn about in all directions, it is evident that

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we are nearing a favorite squirrel resort. And now listen to the noisy chatter of the red-coats as they career among the branches and scurry about the tree-trunks. I doubt if at any season of the year you could find wilder merriment than in yonder rollicking company.

In the confusion of the throng it is impossible for me to distinguish my particular friends, yet I have several acquaintances among the red squirrels of the grove, and one little couple I claim as my intimates. Let me tell you their story as we gather our winter drift-wood. My selections are made from just such stores as you see lying all around us. Resinous cones and fragrant fir-tips; dry twigs and mossy boughs; pine needles and dead leaves; bits of bark, scraps of fungous growths, empty seed-pods, remnants of old nests, nibbled nuts-anything and everything in the way of forest flotsam and jetsam that will kindle the enthusiasm of the hard-hearted back logs or tell in flames the sweet story of the woods finds a place in my drift-wood collection.

And now for the chronicle of Mr. Rufus and Madame Jolie-Queue, as we call the little squirrel couple with whom we are on such intimate terms.

The friendship began when Mr. Rufus, terrified by the advent of a snowy owl in the grove, appeared at one of my windows. Protection and provisions insured for me his lasting regard; for—although the owl fright was a matter of a few days merely—Mr. Rufus has been my constant visitor for more than two years. During the earlier period of his coming, a gentle little wife accompanied him occasionally, attracted also by the supply of good things spread out on the window-sills; but her husband treated her so unkindly and repulsed her so frequently that her visits finally ceased.

Not long after her disappearance the autocratic Rufus conducted to one of my restaurants a dashing, independent-looking squirrel lady, who is evidently Mrs. Rufus Number Two; that is to say, the second wife he has had since I made his acquaintance. For aught I know to the contrary he may have the record of a Blue Beard.

I often speculate with regard to the fate of Number One. Did Rufus basely desert her? Did he become an orthodox, out-and-out widower, or did the gentle little creature, wearying of his tyrannical ways, leave him for some loving, chivalrous mate? With regard to all

these possibilities we can only conjecture, but if the first wife is still in the flesh, I trust that she has the satisfaction of watching the retributive workings of the mills of the gods; for poetic justice has overtaken Mr. Rufus in the shape of Madame Jolie-Queue, the independent little lady who succeeded Number One. The whilom despot now occupies the position of subordinate in the establishment of which he is nominally the head, and he is as humble and subservient as he was formerly arbitrary and tyrannical.

Madame Jolie-Queue received her foreign title on the occasion of her presentation as a bride. The name is a tribute to her magnificent brush, in comparison with which Rufus's tail looks thin and almost apologetic. She is evidently older than he, for while his face is almost youthful, hers bears certain marks which I take for crows' feet equivalents; and an indentation in her right ear, a scar on her left shoulder, and a general martial, independent bearing proclaim her a fighter and a genuine Amazon.

In the olden days Rufus used occasionally to indulge in reveries and moments of relaxation, but no such luxuries are permitted him in the presence of Madame Jolie-Queue. Being herself

superlatively active and energetic, she demands almost incessant and vigorous action from those under her control; and whether it suits Rufus or not, he must be up and doing at her command. I have often watched the funny little couple chasing each other around the tree-trunks till they looked like revolving red belts instead of quadrupeds, or springing through the branches at a rate that could hardly be surpassed by the flying members of their family. After a prolonged exercise of this kind even the vigorous Madame Jolie-Queue is obliged to halt for breath, and Rufus—gratefully taking advantage of the respite granted him-stretches himself out on a horizontal branch and allows his little legs to hang in the abandon of relaxation. But while his sides are still palpitating from the violence of his recent exertions Madame Jolie-Queue compels him to gather himself together for renewed action. I have even seen her slap his face playfully when he seemed inclined to hesitate about obeying.

This remarkable little lady is a very thrifty squirrel; a creature of expedients evidently. She seems to have an idea of utilizing every available object, and she stows away, for times of emer-

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gency, articles for which one would suppose squirrels could have no use. I saw her, one day, toiling and tugging at a dark object which she had managed to carry high up among the branches of a maple-tree. The treasure fell to the ground just when it seemed to be satisfactorily lodged; but, nothing daunted by the failure of her undertaking, Madame Jolie-Queue immediately set about raising it again. Rufus, appearing on the scene at this critical juncture, was pressed into service, and through their combined efforts the mysterious object was once more lodged high up in a tree-fork. After chatting a while over the affair the little couple scampered gayly away, evidently well satisfied with the result of their labors; but they had hardly disappeared among the swaying branches when a gust of wind sent their treasure to the ground. It was unfortunate from their point of view, but not an ill wind for me, as through this occurrence I was enabled to investigate the dark object, which proved to be merely a lump of coal.

By a remarkable coincidence this event occurred during a coal strike, and one member of our household insists that the provident Jolie-Queue had some intimation or premonition of the

threatened dearth in fuel, and was taking precautions accordingly.

Her favorite stowaway places are in the trees nearest one of my most convenient window-sill restaurants. There evidences of her thrift and acquisitiveness may be seen constantly. For experimental purposes all sorts of objects are placed within her reach, and, as a result of this liberal proceeding, I have seen, distributed around among the forks and crotches of the trees in the stowaway region, whole slices of bread, as well as smaller pieces, bits of banana, sections of apples and pears, strings of raw potato peelings, scraps of cake and biscuits, bits of rope, fragments of paper, strips of cloth, old bones, and, on one occasion, this very practical little lady even carried off a dead mouse and hung it over a limb. Nuts are to be seen at almost every branch angle of the trees in the restaurant neighborhoods, and pinecones are sometimes wedged in between the slats of our blinds, or among the trimmings of the house. Indeed Madame Jolie-Queue will appropriate for her treasures any hiding-place that takes her fancy.

You will see that my claim to a close acquaintance with this little furry couple is not without

GRAY DAYS AND MERRY WAYS

foundation, but it is with Jolie-Queue that I am on terms of the greatest intimacy. Her insatiable curiosity leads her to enter my rooms and to critically inspect both myself and my belongings whenever closed windows or wire screens do not place the matter beyond her option. But, even on the occasions when all barriers are removed and promiscuous visitors are admitted, Mr. Rufus seldom ventures beyond window-sill precincts nowadays. Perhaps his better half has put her veto on any greater familiarity, but it was otherwise in the days of the earlier partnership.

It was one beautiful, balmy afternoon during my siesta hour that Madame Jolie-Queue made her first inspecting tour of my sleeping-room. I was comfortably settled on my lounge, and was looking toward the maples that fairly caress my windows, when the little lady suddenly appeared among the yellow leaves. The windows were open and the screens removed—a happy combination of circumstances with which fortune had not previously favored her. She could not afford to lose the golden opportunity. Through disarming, half-closed eyes I watched her, as, with many tail-jerkings and switchings and much suspicious chattering and frequent pauses, she advanced

toward my desk. After a comparatively long halt at the first of the reconnoitring points, she proceeded toward my open grate. In it, awaiting the first cool day to be lighted, was a generous supply of cones and other forest gleanings. Madame Iolie-Queue appeared to feel much at home among such surroundings, but her curiosity soon took her up the chimney. During this stage of the journey she was of course hidden from view; nevertheless, it was easy for me to follow her progress, as various sooty sneezes and sniffs gave reliable clues to her whereabouts. When, at the close of the return journey, which she evidently made head downward, the little rat-like nose appeared, it was as black as ink and most disreputable looking.

The chimney investigation over, Madame Jolie-Queue started off toward the adjoining apartment, where she speedily discovered a bag of walnuts and several other precious bird and squirrel stores. Here was good fortune indeed, and she immediately proceeded to turn it to advantage. Taking one of the hickory nuts in her mouth, she rushed through my room and out the window, and then made her way toward the grove, where I knew she had gone to deposit her

spoil. After a short absence she returned for a new supply, and I dare say she would have kept up this performance for an hour or more; but, finding the game rather monotonous after a dozen repetitions, I concluded to vary it. During one of her absences I shut off the supply-room. I had barely time to close the door, to arrange a trail of nuts from the window to my lounge, and to resume my recumbent position when the busy creature reappeared. At first she seemed somewhat disconcerted by changed conditions, but my stratagem worked successfully after a time; for when she sighted the decoy nuts she began carrying them off as eagerly as in the earlier instance.

The success of this ruse so encouraged me that I ventured on another experiment. I drew a table to the side of the lounge when one of her short absences enabled me to do so, and on this table I rested a hand in which were two or three hickory nuts. Madame Jolie-Queue came bounding along the usual route—this time apparently undisturbed by a new arrangement—and, advancing toward my hand, she took a nut from between my unresisting fingers, evidently looking upon me as a piece of furniture merely.

Another expedition across the room, out the

window, and off among the branches, and back she came to my hand again. But on this occasion she found the fingers nearly closed and the nuts almost inaccessible. Nothing daunted, however, she proceeded to gnaw away the barriers. I felt a preparatory nibble or two, then a decided bite. and I had just about made up my mind that the limit of the experiment had been reached when Madame Jolie-Queue paused. In the taste of human flesh she had detected something alarmingly foreign. For a moment she was silent, eying me all the time with the greatest suspicion and the keenest disapproval, and at the close of the survey she stood up on her little hind legs, clasped her forepaws to her breast, and while fairly dancing with indignation and alarm she squeaked and chattered and rattled forth a volley of vituperative remarks. They were easy to interpret:

"You cheat you; you cheat! You mean, mean, mean, mean cheat! You're alive, you know you are. Alive, I say, alive! Do you hear me? You cheat, you great big ugly human! You mean, mean cheat!"

This was the theme upon which endless emphatic, explosive variations were played to the accompaniment of the most amusing little prancings GRAY DAYS AND MERRY WAYS

and stampings, ridiculously suggestive of the performances of a miniature dancing bear.

The creature who was denouncing me was so small and her indignation was so great that, even at the risk of driving her away I could not restrain my mirth. I uttered no sound and remained with half-closed eyes, but I fairly shook with laughter. To my surprise the slight earthquake did not disturb her. She continued her denunciations until the theme was exhausted or the indignation spent, when she subsided and jumped to the floor. I expected to see her pursue her way toward the desk and out the window, but, instead of taking the usual route, she began ascending the lounge at the point just back of my head. Her idea was evidently to investigate me closely. Again she was beyond the range of vision, but, as on the occasion of her visit to the chimney, I was able to follow her, squeaks of apprehension and curiosity punctuating each step of her jerky course.

It was my turn to be apprehensive when she arrived at my head. Remembering an occasion on which a pet robin had thought my hair worthy of consideration for a nest-lining, I braced myself to meet Madame Jolie-Oueue's possible re-

quirements for sample locks. She did not halt at my head, however, but proceeded directly over my face until she reached my shoulder. Here she sat up, as if for a critical survey of the situation. It was a relief to me when, at the end of what seemed like a small age, though in reality it was only about a minute, she continued her journey; for the rank, greasy odor which, to a greater or less extent, characterizes all the furry forest-folk, is the atmosphere that immediately surrounds Madame Jolie-Queue. All out-doors is none too spacious for her and her kind.

Arrived at my feet she evidently saw great possibilities in my boots, for she darted back to the nuts from which I had slowly and cautiously withdrawn my fingers, and carrying the treasures to my feet, she stowed them away under my heels. Then, with nose and paws, she carefully pushed and patted the nuts into place, after which she drew the soft, yielding folds of my dress over the secret store.

A moment or two of complacent contemplation and she withdrew. On her return she found me seated at my desk, a liberty which she was at first inclined to resent, as various demonstrations of the dancing-bear order attested, but her annoy-

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ance was short-lived. She soon learned to accept me as a necessary evil; and from that time to this Madame Jolie-Queue enters my room fearlessly whenever the fancy takes her and circumstances permit. She has generally been honorable with regard to my possessions, but there are certain considerations which lead me to keep a close watch on my furry visitor whenever she honors me with her presence. Said considerations are that she once abstracted a small toilet article from my bureau; that she occasionally has a fancy for continuing the scallops and heightening the open-work effect of lace curtains, and that she is very partial to all woollen materials, and has no scruples about cutting out and carrying away for her snug little apartments samples of any warm garment on which her eve may fall.

Whenever I see poor little squirrel prisoners peering out from behind cruel bars or treading the dreary, interminable road of the revolving wheel, I think of Rufus and Jolie-Queue in the blessed free region of green trees and open skies; and I realize that the worst fate that can overtake them in the course of their life in the woods would be kind when compared with the desolation of imprisonment.

How early the short November day draws to its close! All the joyous touches that relieve the grayness have vanished, and cheery song and lively chatter alike have ceased, for the merry little wood-folk have gone to their shelter. Now we hear no sound save the beautiful, mournful strains of the sonata pathétique among the wind-swept pine-tops, and into the deeper recesses of the forest the gloom of dusk has already made its way.

But in our drift-wood harvest we have that which will bring back to us not only the solemn influences of this twilight hour, but all the cheer and brightness that preceded it. Season after season will pass before us while merry sparks fly and dancing flames enfold our forest gleanings. We shall hear again the hum of insects and the songs of birds. We shall breathe the sweet air of the pines and the fragrance of violets will reach us; and thus through days of cold and storm or long winter evenings, as treasure after treasure is given to the flames, the story of the woods will be told anew and the happy forest days lived again.

In the Solemn Midnight

"The angels came through the forest—and sang. And their song was about the Child, the Child, the Child that had been born. Then the stars came down from the skies and danced and hung upon the branches of the tree, and they, too, sang that song—the song of the Child."

EUGENE FIELD.



HOW eloquent the silence of this starry night! How marvellous the hush of "the listening earth." In this calm moment, it would almost seem as if there might reach us some echo of the music of the distant spheres or some strains of the song that watching shepherds heard

In the solemn midnight, Centuries ago.

Look up through the dark pines at the splendors of the sky. In the deep, boundless blue, myriads and myriads of heavenly bodies, each glowing with a radiance of its own, each differing from the other in glory, but each, whether "bright in beauty" or "faint and small," telling anew the story of the guiding star of the East.

And now on the fragrant breath of spruce and fir and "goodly cedar," come to us visions of

happy children around gift-laden trees; of joyous reunions in holly-decked homes, and of blessed sanctuaries where evergreen garland and wreath and text proclaim the coming of the "peaceful Prince of earth and heaven."

In this quiet hour—the earnest of a time when all discord shall cease, and universal peace and harmony reign—a quaint legend comes to my mind. A story of the long, long ago, when the gates of heaven stood open and the golden light streamed down upon the earth, and mortals could look up at the saints in their abode of bliss, and greetings came from heaven to earth and rose from earth to heaven. Sometimes strains of the most marvellous music were heard. Before these sounds the wind held its breath and the rivers stood still, and the children of earth silently pressed each other's hands as they listened; for, though their hearts overflowed with holy joy, it was not in mortal speech to tell what they felt, for God Himself had written the music and the angel choir sang it.

So it was in the golden long ago; but, when discord came to earth, the gates of heaven were closed, and mortals could no longer greet the holy ones or gaze up into the abode of bliss. And as

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for the scroll on which the beautiful music was written, the angels in sorrow tore it in thousands of pieces and scattered it to the four winds of heaven. Thus it was brought to earth, and wherever the precious fragments fell men rushed to pick them up, and each mortal obtained for himself a bit of the heavenly music.

But alas, about this they quarrelled also. One asserted that he alone possessed the true heavenly music. Another despised the fragment his neighbor held. Some interpreted their notes amiss, others added a flourish or two. Oh! it was a clamor, a discord, a din!

And so it is yet; but a day is to come in which the stars shall fall to the earth and the sun into the sea. Then the children of men will crowd eagerly to the gates of heaven, as now our little ones press to our door for a sight of the Christmas tree; and then will God send the angels to gather up all the fragments of the marvellous music; and the pieces will be put together once more—each in its own place and in its right relation to the others—and again the heavenly music shall ring out true and clear.

And as the wondering children of earth pass in through the open gates of heaven one will whisper to the other in humiliation and amazement: "How wonderful, how marvellous! There is the bit you had, and here is my portion. I thought it greatest of all, and lo, it is but a single note. But listen to that rapturous strain! What can it be? Behold it is the despised fragment that yonder little one held. Oh! how clear and true and beautiful is the heavenly music, rid of false flourishes, interpreted aright, and each fragment—even to the smallest—in the very place God planned for it."

I had fancied that our passing might startle the little feathered sleepers, or that our paths might intersect those of other nocturnal ramblers, but all is still. Here and there through the trees we see the late lights of the town, and over the river we catch meteor-like glimpses of swiftly speeding, brightly lighted trains, but on our path falls no light save that of the stars, and from the intense stillness we might fancy ourselves the only waking creatures in the grove.

Yet no doubt at this very moment scores of bright, wondering eyes are peering out at us from ivy-vines and sheltering hedges; from hollow trees and thick evergreens; and even by the light of the stars we see that this thin covering of snow is

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crossed and recrossed by hosts of small footprints. They mark the recent passing of nimble rabbits. Perhaps the little creatures were disporting themselves here at the very time of our appearance, for they are partial to nocturnal rambles; and no doubt, from the security of their shelter, they are watching our course with curious gaze.

How strange do even every-day, familiar wood-land paths appear, when entered during the hours of the night! To the forest's midnight utterance may be applied what has been said of the voice of the pines: "It whispers to us of things we have never said and never can say—things that lie deeper than words, deeper than thought. Blessed are our ears if we hear, for the message is not to be understood by every comer, nor indeed by any except at happy moments. In this temple all hearing is given by inspiration, for which reason the language of [the forest] is inarticulate, as Jesus spoke in parables." *

At last I hear a faint murmur; the slightest of rustlings among the dead leaves that cling to the boughs of this old beech. Of all the summer trees of the grove only the oaks and the beeches still keep some of their foliage. The latter trees are

^{*} Mr. Bradford Torrey, in The Foot-Path Way.

"very slow in unfolding their leaves" and "extremely loath to part with them; for that matter the beeches often hold their faded, ghostly, brownwhite leaves through the winter." *

In sunset lights this old tree takes on a delicate pink flush, not unlike the faint bloom one sometimes sees on aged checks; but in the starlight the dead leaves have an almost spectral appearance.

Here you see the dim, faint outline of a bare tree from near whose base long, slender brier shoots rise. When I first saw the brier it was covered with leaf and bloom, and one long, fragrant, graceful arm-its skeleton still clings to the leafless maple—carried flowers far up the trunk of the tree, even into its very branches. Thus was hidden a great scar which days of Autumn despoiling bring to view; for a lightningdart once smote the beautiful tree and seamed its strong trunk. Then it was that the sweetbrier crept into the wounded heart and shared with it her leaf and bloom and fragrance. After many days much of the old vigor returned to the stricken tree and the wound was healed: but the scar remains.

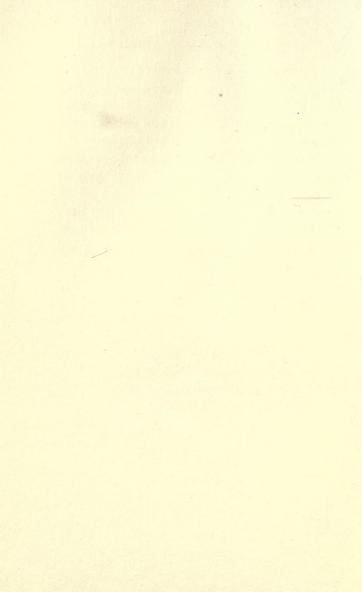
Tree and brier sleep together now, but when * Mr. F. Schuyler Mathews, in Familiar Trees and Their Leaves.

IN THE SOLEMN MIDNIGHT

the spring comes they will awake to old joys and new gladness. For again little lovers will hold their trysts among the branches of the maple; again will gentle winds caress it, and the warm sun kiss it, and soft showers bathe its leaves and moisten its roots; and once more the sweetbrier arms will conceal the scarred trunk, and the wounded tree shall blossom as the rose.

Now the wee, small hours are drawing near, and from yonder hedge come expostulating twitterings; faint sounds of sleepy remonstrance and petition, as if some little feathered creature were putting in a plea for a chance to rest without farther alarm from passing footstep or shadowy human form. With the first glimmer of day these little people must be astir. Their safety, their very lives depend upon their early vigilance. Then let us withdraw that they may take their rest while the hours of darkness remain.

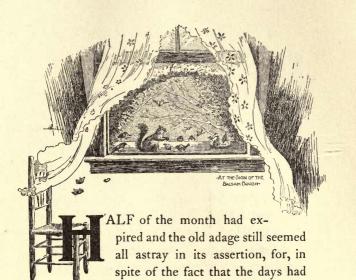
So good-night, little ones,



When the Days Begin to Lengthen

"And often now when the skies are wild,
And hoarse and sullen the night winds blow,
And lanes and hollows with drifts are piled,
I think of the violets under the snow."

T. HEMPSTEAD.



passed the decreasing point and were gradually gaining in duration, the cold, instead of strengthening, gave place to a spring-like mildness; and many a deluded bud began to swell under the influence of the misleading warmth.

But January has asserted itself at last. Day before yesterday, toward nightfall, the heavy skies began sending out feathery scouts, the earliest of which fluttered aimlessly about as if undecided whether to alight or to float back to their cloudhomes. But after a time these few irregular forerunners were reinforced by myriads of their fairy companions, until, at length, nothing was to be

seen but a world of merry snowflakes dancing their way down to a whitening earth.

A certain seriousness of purpose, a determination not to loiter, characterized later comers; for I watched the noiseless procession until darkness fell, and even in the blackness of the night I stole to my window now and then, in the hope of ascertaining something of the progress of the storm. But only over the way where a solitary streetlamp cast a faint, flickering light could I distinguish anything. There, against the dim flame, I saw the white army ever hurrying on its earthward way, and when morning broke it was still through a veil of falling snow that I caught glimpses of the outer world.

In the light of day I saw that all the hollows and irregularities of field and road had vanished, and that each roof was represented by a snowy mound. Trunks and limbs of leafless trees were delicately outlined in white, while all the evergreen boughs drooped with the weight of their fair burdens, and every branch of the Norway spruces formed a cradle for the snow. We had already received from the clouds good measure, pressed down and running over, and still the soft flakes fell.

WHEN THE DAYS BEGIN TO LENGTHEN

No paths were broken at this early hour, and a visit to the grove would have entailed both risk and discomfort; but I knew that I had only to wait a short time for hosts of grove representatives to come to me. "The little friends must not find me unprepared, however," I said to myself. "A welcome as warm as circumstances will allow shall await the very earliest of the guests." So I began scattering my supplies over the veranda roof: bird peppers, bread crumbs, grain, waste canary-seed, cracked hickory nuts and powdered or crushed dog-biscuit; but in less than a minute the rapidly falling flakes had sealed each tiny tunnel made in the soft snow by the provisions, and my entire feast was obliterated.

The veranda roof is only a Dépendance, however; so in my failure at this point, I turned to the winter tavern proper, At the Sign of the Balsam Bough. I must acknowledge that the name is more alliterative than exact, seeing that not even a sprig of balsam figures in the construction of the hostelry; but its habitués are not hard, cold, matter-of-fact sticklers for exact terms and expressions. I may call their tavern what I will, provided I keep it well provisioned.

The corner-stone of this establishment was laid

one frosty day when a sturdy little maiden came into my den laden with pine and spruce branches "for the birds." How to utilize the donation was a puzzle at first; but even as I pondered the matter fancy pictured them to me forming themselves into the shelter they afterward became. I have since heard of a number of bird restaurants conducted on various plans, but it so happened that none of them were known to me when I embarked on what I supposed to be a unique and original undertaking.

Making choice of a window that looks southward toward the grove into the very heart of the wood-thrush corner—one whose sill had formerly been one of my ordinary bird and squirrel restaurants—I wedged the branches firmly between the fastened-back shutters and the house in such a way that the tips met in front of the window; while long, curving boughs fell outward over the eaves, and two strong perches extended entirely across from one side of the casement to the other. Thus, you see, a perfect bower was formed; a delightful shelter and perching-place at the very table d'hôte itself. Of course the boughs have since been many times replaced, yet to-day the tavern stands practically as it stood at the time

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of its establishment, and unless you have made the experiment of such an arrangement, you cannot picture to yourself the great advantages that result from this simple protective measure. It affords the little pensioners a shelter in which to lunch comfortably, to arrange fur or feathers leisurely, and to rest without fear of attack or pursuit; while, to onlookers like ourselves, there result from the arrangement opportunities for the most delightful and intimate acquaintance imaginable with the natural life of these happy little people. I can almost delude myself into the belief that I also am a tree-top dweller, as I hob-nob with the little feathered friends among the branches hardly two feet distant from my writing-table.

At first the nearness of human beings caused them some anxiety, but a short probation sufficed to put them entirely at their ease with us; and now we have the rare privilege of seeing and studying the little wild things as they appear without a shadow of disguise or shyness.

Sometimes the sun shining through the frail little legs reveals each vein and fibre of their delicate structure. As for the study of claws, it can be carried to great lengths under such favorable

circumstances. Malformations and other individual peculiarities are sure to come to light in this close scrutiny, and Jack Frost, his mark, is seen in many a pitiful stump of a leg or an incomplete supply of toes. Damages from other sources can also be traced at the clinic of the tavern. Here it was, for instance, that I diagnosed the case of a junco with an injured wing, and a sparrow with a broken leg. These two little creatures lodge in the lattice-enclosed shelter under the veranda. One of my pensioners has a white eye, an indication of blindness, I suppose; but the other eye is so bright and keen that it appears equal to the performance of double duty.

The tavern is the scene of feasts and jollifications, and toilet-makings and cosey moments of nestling among the evergreen branches; but there are also times when the poor little guests bear evidences of having been storm-buffeted and nearly frozen, and the tiny claws appear too numb to grasp the perches. Often only one foot at a time is able to serve owing to the fact that the other is drawn up among the protecting feathers in the effort to thaw it out. Think of the comfort of the well-provisioned Balsam Bough Tavern at times of such great distress; for even in driving

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storms my hostelry boasts of snow and windproof nooks and corners.

Now that you understand the situation, you will not wonder that I did not waste a second supply of food on the veranda roof. Coming at once to the evergreen branch window, I cleared the sill, scattered the snow that had accumulated on the boughs, and then, in the most sheltered corners of the establishment, I placed abundant supplies of my stores.

You should have seen the eager crowd that flocked to the feast. All day long, whenever I looked out, I saw detachments of juncos, chickadees, pine-siskins, song-sparrows, white-crowned, white-throated, and English sparrows contending for the supplies, and down below, in their lattice-enclosed fortress under the veranda, the disabled junco and sparrow were partaking of an olla podrida, the exact counterpart of the spread at the Balsam Bough Tavern.

Later in the day when the flakes no longer fell and the snow had begun to harden, Madame Jolie-Queue came dancing through the whitened branches, scattering sprays of the glistening powder at each touch of her nimble feet. Then, springing over the porte-cochère and bounding

across the veranda roof, she brought up at the window-sill with a triumphant flourish of her beautiful tail. First she sampled the entire stock of provisions and then settled down to a feast of those that pleased her best; after which she picked up all that she could carry and scampered home again.

It was only late in the afternoon that the snow was firm enough to bear even such a sprite as Madame Jolie-Queue; and when the sun set, pale green lights appearing among the belts of gold and shafts of flame told of the coming of great cold. And even as I watched the glowing sky delicate little traceries, fairy-like designs, began to creep over my window panes; miniature trees and vines, flowers and ferns, tropical growths and jungle tangles, all done in an exquisite filigree of frost.

During the day the sleigh-bell tinkle had been of an intermittent order, owing to frequent compulsory halts in the soft, deep snow, but at nightfall one continuous merry jingle told of sharp runners gliding smoothly and swiftly over a firm, even surface, while responsive creakings and crunchings from the hard-pressed snow added their testimony to other frosty evidences.

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"To-day will be a day of days in the grove," I said to myself. "The perfection of a mid-winter walk will be ours."

When I again inspected the landscape daylight had come, and the work of clearing away the snow had already begun; but instead of the feathery mounds which path-breakers so lightly heaped up yesterday, clear, firm squares were being marked out by strong shovels, while a dazzling breastwork of solid white blocks rose between the road and the sidewalk.

The way to the grove is open to us now, and I ask you to accompany me through it on a walk brisk enough to circumvent Jack Frost's deepest designs.

Think of the "treasures of the snow" represented in even a tiny fragment of one of these compressed blocks; and what hosts and hosts of exquisite snow-flowers we crush at every step. I caught a few of the falling crystals yesterday in the hope of being able to trace the wonderful law of sizes as exemplified in each of the tiny forms, whether star, prism, pyramid, wheel, or any other of the fanciful shapes they assume—we are told that nearly a thousand varieties have been noted

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—but in each instance delicate spikes, bars, points, and all the fairy fretwork vanished before I had time for anything but the most superficial of inspections.

Although the wind has relieved the branches of much of their snowy drapery, enough still remains for a universal Christmas-tree effect. Santa Claus and his reindeer careering through the pine-tops would not seem at all incongruous in this Arctic setting.

This winding path always rewards those who enter it with seeing eyes. What will it reveal to us of furred or feathered life on this icy day when our warmest wraps are called into requisition and our well-protected feet and fingers tingle with the cold?

My question is immediately answered, for there goes a brown creeper on his plodding, spiral way. Watch for what looks like a piece of moving bark on that nearest elm if you would recognize him. How do the numb claws maintain their grasp, and what insect life can the little bird possibly dislodge on this frozen day? Yet he seems to be finding something very satisfactory in the elm-bark crevices. Larvæ à la glace is perhaps a favorite dish with insectivorous feathered folk.

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In the woods in winter one is more apt to hear chirpings or twitterings and prosaic calls than song. But hark! there is a genuine carol. Not of a very high order perhaps, but a song nevertheless; bright and cheery and evidently of great satisfaction to the performer himself. It proceeds from the throat of that happy little chickadee over in the hedge just opposite. See him as he sways with all the airs of a conservatory graduate. Bless his little heart, I believe he is carolling a greeting to us. Chickadees are among the most sociable of my restaurant guests. They frequently take advantage of the open window to step from Balsam Bough Tavern precincts right into my den.

Here is a little group of visitors not to be met with every winter day. They are crossbills, and I occasionally have the honor of welcoming them to my little hostelry. The sight of the twisted bill always recalls to one's mind the tender legend of the little bird striving to draw the ruthless iron nail from the Saviour's pierced palm.

Stained with blood and never tiring,
With its beak it doth not cease.
From the cross 'twould free the Saviour,
Its Creator's Son release.

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And the Saviour speaks in mildness;
Blest be thou of all the good!
Bear as token of this moment
Marks of blood and holy rood!

And the bird is called the crossbill;
Covered all with blood so clear,
In the groves of pine it singeth
Songs like legends strange to hear.*

If you wish to see what it is that attracts the crossbill to coniferous trees, shake one of these spruce cones. Tiny winged seeds flutter out from among the scales, and the twisted bill is the best kind of an implement with which to reach these stowaway stores.

A flock of snow-buntings, or snow-flakes, as they are sometimes called, is always a delightful sight to me. "Whirling about in the drifting snow to catch the seeds on the tallest stalk that the wind in the open meadow uncovers, the snow-flakes suggest a lot of dead leaves being blown through the all-pervading whiteness. Beautiful soft brown, gray, and predominating black and white coloring distinguish these capricious visit-

^{*} Longfellow, in the Legend of the Crossbill.

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ors from the slaty junco, the 'snow-bird' more commonly known. They are indeed the only birds we have that are nearly white; and rarely, if ever, do they rise far above the ground their plumage so admirably imitates."*

The merry little creatures have discovered a tract that was seed-strewn this morning for the benefit of needy feathered folk. And now juncos join them and a brownish gray stranger alights among them. This stranger is a bird who has appeared several times at my restaurant since the great snow-storm set in; the only one of its kind I have ever seen in the grove, and a good deal of a puzzle to me when I at first sighted it. I thought the creature was an overgrown, freakishly colored sparrow until I discovered that it walked instead of hopping. A female cow-bird it proves to be, evidently a waif, whom stress of circumstances has driven to my winter tavern. You may imagine that this lady was an unexpected guest, especially at this season. Whatever charges one may bring against her during the nesting period, no fault can be found with her behavior at the restaurant. She pays no attention to matters that do not concern her; she

* Neltje Blanchan, in Bird Neighbors.

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participates in none of the contentions or disputes that may be going on around her, and she has the good sense to simply ignore the occasional digs and pecks that fall to her share as a member of an eager, hungry crowd.

How much the cow-bird gives the wise men to think about, in her habit of stealthily depositing her eggs in the nests of other birds! She usually selects for her purpose the homes of little creatures, such as chippies, song-sparrows, warblers, and vireos. "But one egg is usually deposited in a single nest; the presence of two eggs probably indicates . . . the visits of two cow-birds rather than a visit from a single individual." It may be that in thus distributing her family the cow-bird mother has a thought of securing a generous share of food and attention for each foster child. At any rate, because of its bulk and its enormous demands for food, the intruder is generally the cause of the rightful occupants being starved or crowded out of their own homes.

"To me," says Mr. Bradford Torrey, in "A Rambler's Lease," "I must confess, it is inexplicable that any bird should be either so unobservant as not to recognize a foreign egg at sight,

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or so easy-tempered as not to insist on straight-way being rid of it; though this is no more inscrutable, it may be, than for another bird persistently, as it were on principle, to cast her own offspring on the protection of strangers; while this in turn is not more mysterious than ten thousand every-day occurrences all about us. After all, it is a wise man that knows what to wonder at; while the wiser he grows the stronger is likely to become his conviction that, little as may be known, nothing is absolutely unknowable; that in the world, as in its Author, there is probably 'no darkness at all,' save as daylight is dark to owls and bats."

If it were not for the rigors of the day we might stand and examine at our leisure the make-up and movements of this little downy woodpecker, for his fearlessness permits a very close approach. Take one look at the convenient arrangement of his toes; two back and two front. Here we have the secret of the ease with which he takes his perpendicular walk; also the solution of his being able to sleep resting against a tree-trunk. The hind toes act as props and the stiff tail-feathers may serve as additional supports whenever he chooses to press them into the

tree. Like all of nature's children, he is well equipped for his work. His strong bill makes an excellent chisel, and his long, barbed tongue is admirably suited to spearing insect prey. Listen to the vigorous rat-a-tat-tat, rat-a-tat-tat of the little bill. It always seems to me as if a neuralgic headache must be the natural outcome of such an energetic hammering and probing of the bark.

But remarkable as are the downy woodpecker's acrobatic feats, they are easily surpassed by those of that little gray neighbor of his who is walking—not backing—down the trunk of the opposite tree. This is the white-breasted nut-hatch. "Quank, quank, you can't do this," he seems to be saying to the industrious, upward-travelling woodpecker. Would it not seem as if all the blood in the little gray body must rush to its owner's head during this state of inversion!

His name tells us that he is not altogether dependent on larvæ and insects for his food. Chestnuts, beech-nuts, and even nuts with hard shells may form part of his menu. His strong little bill is the hatchet with which he splits the nuts open as they lodge in the tree-crannies where he himself has wedged them; or again he holds

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them in the firm clasp of his little claw, while hammering away to break them open.

Now I hear a pine-siskin, though none of the little creatures are in sight, and there is a whole chorus of chickadees. Now the white-throat's sweet notes reach us, and, like the echo of this strain, the white-crown's plaintive whistle follows. I have mentioned both these handsome sparrows as patrons of my restaurant, but the white-crowns greatly outnumber their cousins. On two or three occasions, when all the other habitués had retired for the night, I found a white-crown snugly settled among the branches of the tavern, which fact leads me to suppose that I have one lodger, as well as many boarders.

During these days of unusual cold and heavy storm, supplies disappear so rapidly at the Balsam Bough Tavern that the dishes need frequent replenishing, and I daresay a hungry, clamorous crowd awaits me even now. Before embarking on the undertaking of keeping a bird-hotel I asked myself, "Can I offer the little creatures a shelter where they will be beyond the reach of their enemies? Am I both able and willing to continue providing for my charges day after day, day after day, until the rigors of winter are over,

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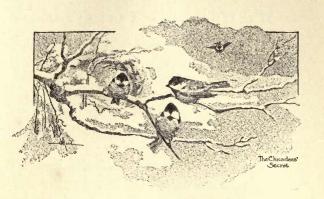
and the withdrawal of my protection and bounty can do no harm?"

For we may feed our feathered friends fitfully or not at all in summer if we will, but after having once taught the little pensioners to resort to crumb and seed strewn localities in cold weather, and to rely on the bounty of their human friends in winter, forgetfulness or carelessness in the matter of providing for them may cause the death of scores of the trusting little creatures.

Come with me now, and make the acquaintance of my interesting little guests. You will have ample opportunity, for they will linger long after the pink glow has fallen on the glittering snow and the rosy lights appear among the treetops. The warmth of the house will be most welcome after our frosty walk, and from the sheltered den we may watch the restaurant until the last boarder departs and the white-crown tucks himself up in his evergreen cot. The Loosing of the Fetters

"A world where the leaping fountains glance, And the buds expand, is waiting its hour."

T. HEMPSTEAD.



ESTERDAY the world was enveloped in dreariness and mist; to-day jewel-lights flash out on every side. From the tiniest shrub to the tallest pine, come sparkle and glitter and dazzling glow. Each tree-trunk is diamondveneered by the frost; each spruce-cone glitters to the point of every scale; each cluster of pineneedles is held at its tip by a jewel-clasp. Fringes of diamonds hang from arbors and eaves of dwellings, opalescent lights play around empty nests, and where, only yesterday, a bit of rag drooped from one of these deserted homes, like a signal of distress, a jewelled pennant now ap-Here glows a topaz, yonder gleams a ruby, and on beyond, through a tangle of diamond-coated twigs, an emerald flashes and an

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amethyst throbs. In the full light of the sun all the colors of the rainbow come and go among the jewel-bedecked branches. But when, in the earliest of the morning hours, the moon looked down upon this fair scene, it was as if the trees were hung with tiny twinkling stars, while a soft, pearly radiance fell upon our whole earth.

The gorgeousness of this glitter is almost more than our eyes can endure, but it is the glory of the transient. For see! from yonder maple-spray the drops are already falling. The jewels are dissolving. The world has begun to weep for the release of Baldur, the Good, the Bright, the Beautiful. All the fierce giants of ice and cold and darkness are once more to be banished, and the gentle summer gods will reign in their stead. We feel this and exult. There is in our hearts the new old joy that comes year after year, year after year, when the genial sun awakens the earth to the promise of a new life. But the joyful influences are no less keenly felt by the army of little wild creatures who share with us the happiness of this hour. In that soft, dreamy little song which comes to us from yonder leafless hedge the tree-sparrow tells of the joy that is in store for him and his beloved, in some far-off

land where stunted trees break the dreary monotony of barren fields, and the sun shines far into the short night of a brief, unproductive summer.

That beautiful joyous carol, the bluebird's warble, is another expression of the delight inspired by the gentle influences of the day. The song-sparrows, who have perhaps been with us unnoticed throughout the entire winter, now ravish our ears and gladden our hearts as they carol out their joy in the beautiful time of promise.

And there is Chanticleer adding his loud, emphatic testimony to that of all the other creatures who are proclaiming the fact that winter's reign is almost over. His wives are clucking and muttering in their usual discontented and uncertain manner. It may be their way of expressing satisfaction, but to me there is nothing but anxiety and suspicion in the ordinary tones of a hen. Quite different is it when she soothingly talks to her little ones at bedtime or animatedly and enticingly summons them to some choice tid-bit of her own discovering, or fussily and noisily proclaims to the world that she has contributed an egg to its treasures.

But in the crowing of a cock there is a cheery, friendly ring, though it may be a trifle too posi-

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tive and patronizing. And although his motif is somewhat monotonous and restricted, yet so artistic is he in the matter of producing telling crescendo and diminuendo, or presto and rallentendo effects, that his renderings always appear to have a certain fitness for any occasion he may be celebrating.

We hear the soft drip, drip, drip, on all sides now. Delicate little perforations are appearing in the snow—so firm and glittering a short time ago, so dull and soft already. Tiny rivulets are beginning to run down the slopes where the sun's rays fall most directly; little bubbles are oozing up from the softened ground, and the dissolving red shale will soon color even the purest of the snow.

Sometimes in the heart of a crowded city the sight of a bit of this red dust adhering to my garments will banish, for a moment, the recognition of the mad haste and rush and roar, and will transport me in fancy to the quiet, familiar home-scenes through which the picturesque redearth belt runs.

The snow-buntings, as well as some other lovers of far northern haunts, have left us, but flickers and other woodpeckers still greet us,

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while nut-hatches, juncos, chickadees, whitethroated and white-crowned sparrows—in fact, nearly all the birds we saw during our January walk—are still here. But there is in their twitterings and notes and songs something that we did not hear on that beautiful frosty day. "There is a mystery in the air—some great concerted movement on hand."

"Something's coming. Something's coming. We feel it, we know it," they call and chirp and sing and twitter.

"What is it, what is it?" I ask, eagerly.

And one small voice makes answer:

"Chick-a-dee-dee-dee-dee-dee. You'll soon see-see-see-see."



Welcome the Coming Guest

"O Spring-time sweet,
Over the hills come thy lovely feet.
The earth's white mantle is cast away,
She clothes herself all in green to-day;
And the little flowers that hid from the cold
Are springing anew from the warm, fresh
mould."

Translated by J. F. CLARKE.



EBRUARY'S whispered promise is fulfilled, for spring has come at last. Maple buds are swelling; lilac leaves are preparing to unfold; elms are decking themselves out in delicate little red-brown tufts; strawberry vines are feeling their way cautiously over the face of the newly awakened earth; tender green blades are peeping up through last year's dry, brown grasses; early shrubs are hastening toward the time of blossoms, and tangled honeysuckle vines are taking on the brownish tints that tell of coursing sap and coming leaves. Now and then we hear the droning of a solitary honey-bee; again a tiny gnat hovers near, or an early moth flutters by, and the atmosphere is filled with the delicious fragrance of sun-warmed dead leaves, and tender beginnings of vegetation.

English sparrows are flying about with an air of the greatest importance, carrying in their beaks

straws and strings and other official announcements of their intentions. The grackle croaks and creaks in the swaying spruce-tops. The chickadee calls plaintively, "Come sweet, come sweet." The song-sparrow's throat ripples and swells as he breaks into ecstatic little outbursts of melody, the fox-sparrow deluges the thickets with rapturous song, and the woodpecker laughs in his glee. Juncos, white-crowned and white-throated sparrows trill and whistle and warble, as they tell of the good world, the beautiful world, the glad springtime, and the joy of living.

And oh! the delight of the day on which I sighted our first robin guests! The great, handsome fellows (the earliest comers are always males) went chattering about through the trees; some of them inspecting familiar haunts, others evidently making the acquaintance of our neighborhood.

Much excited calling and chattering goes on among the red-breasts through the day, but at dawn and twilight on the warmest of these late March days, before labor has begun, or when the busy tasks are ended, all worldly thoughts are banished and their voices rise in joyous, triumphant hymns of praise.

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Now and then, in strolling along country roadsides, we catch glimpses of beautiful bluebirds flying over the fields or halting on fence rails and posts. But, even while halting, they lift their wings again and again, as if reluctant to forego for one little moment the joy and freedom of flight. They also—these birds of heaven's own hue—tell, in happy warbles, of resurrection, gladness, and the joy of living.

And hark, from down among the sheltered streams of the meadows come other voices. We hear them faintly and at long intervals now; but in the evening, when all other sounds are hushed, the air is filled with the high, but not inharmonious, peeping of the earliest frogs.

So it is now; but stormy winds have raged and heavy snows have fallen since the day when we watched the ice-jewels vanishing before the powerful February sun. And cold nights may come again, and biting frosts may chill these buds of promise and silence these joyous notes; but it can be only for a time, a very little time. Spring is striding forward now, and winter's hold is surely broken.

The tide of northward travel has already set in, but, as usual, much of the passing takes place during the night, and only occasionally are we fortunate enough to sight the migrators. An evening or so ago a strange chance revealed to us the passing of a flock of wild geese. The travellers were completely hidden by a heavy fog, and we should never have suspected their presence but for the anxious calls and cries of a detached portion of the company which had gone astray in the fog.

"Where, where? Where, where?" we heard from the separated members.

"Here, here! Here, here!" answered the firm voice of the leader; but it was not with one or two directions that he rallied his scattered forces. There was a great deal of calling and much answering before the listeners heard the regular movement of wings announcing the company assembled and once more under way.

You look in vain for the evergreen shelter at the window-sill tavern. With the coming of spring the establishment closes for the season, being altogether too modest an hostelry to accommodate the multitude of guests which the warmer weather brings. So, until wintry days come again, the table d'hôte proper will be served out under the hospitable maples whose branches

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shade our own dining-room. In this neighborhood are several large, rough flower-pot saucers, with their frequently renewed fresh-water supplies. This, for the bathing accommodation of my feathered visitors, although even in winter they are not without drinking opportunities. Elevated posts are always recommended for the distribution of one's bounty to birds, and you will remember that, in making you acquainted with the workings of my window-sill restaurant, I laid great stress on the necessity for choosing a site where the little pensioners would be secure from the attacks of prowling enemies. Yet when spring comes, I scatter my provisions out on the grass under the maples without the slightest fear of marauders; for the warmer season table d'hôte boasts of a formidable guardian, in the shape of a vigilant little Chihuahuan; and such is the power of valor that all the cats of the neighborhood flee in terror before this redoubtable little creature; three pounds and a half of dog! During the winter my little Mexican takes her outings in the middle of the day only; and these are either short, brisk expeditions for the sake of exercise, or excursions taken in protecting arms; therefore, in cold weather she cannot fill any outdoor position of trust. But unless the spring be a very backward one, she enters upon her office as guardian of the table d'hôte quite early in March, and she holds the position until late in the autumn, which is the time of the window-sill inn reopening. Nor is her perpetual presence needed to produce the desired effect. The fact that she may appear at any time seems to be recognized by all four-footed bird enemies of the neighborhood, and suffices to keep them at a distance.

The little dog evidently realizes to the utmost the importance of her office, for at the very mention of danger, her beautiful eyes, so tender and gazelle-like in their natural expression, assume a look of sternest watchfulness; and the soft, flexible ears that quiver and droop so responsively at a word or a glance of affection, rise to formidable heights of aggressiveness and alertness when harm threatens her charges.

Sometimes she walks demurely in and out among the guests, daintily sampling bits of moistened bread (an article which, by the way, she would scorn if it appeared in her own menu, but for which she has a predilection at the birds' table), but the little creatures heed neither her coming nor her going. Again she sits down in the midst of the assemblage, and gazes with friendly interest at the proceedings of its quaint members; but her presence causes not even an anxious flutter among them. Sometimes her little satin coat of dazzling white and rich tan brushes against the rather dingy garment of a cottontail rabbit, and frequently Mr. Rufus and Madame Jolie-Queue inspect her closely, or dance around her as if inviting her to join in their frolics. But even when the graceful little sprite frisks and gambols in the very neighborhood of the banquet her merriment causes no uneasiness among her protégés, for its friendly nature is thoroughly understood.

In order not to harm my feathered visitors by interfering with their regular quest for food, I serve the meals at scheduled hours only. But at periods of untimely frosts, I spread an all-day feast. None of my pensioners approve of the latter plan more highly than do the robins. Mrs. Mabel Osgood Wright it was who discovered that powdered or moistened dog-biscuit and bread are a very satisfactory temporary substitute for worms stowed away in ice-locked larders. With genial days the dog-biscuit disappears from my bill of fare, but moistened bread is the summer

of diet, however, the supplies that I put out for my pensioners are such as they would be likely to pick up in their roadside, meadow, or garden gleanings, and cannot be injurious to them.

At this season my regular patrons are cottontail rabbits, squirrels, robins, grackles, chickadees, juncos, white-crowned, song, tree, and—of course -English sparrows. I occasionally have a visit from a white-throat, and now and then my unusual winter guest, the cow-bird lady, partakes of the feast. Later, cat-birds, chipping sparrows, wood-thrushes, goldfinches, and sometimes orchard orioles join the party, but usually not until the juncos, the white-crowns, white-throats and other birds partial to nesting in cool northern regions have left us. At any time I may have representatives of the most exclusive families in birdland among the transients, but these eat à la carte or merely halt, much after the manner of humans who stop a moment at the sight of a small or a great assemblage of their kind, and who continue their way as soon as their curiosity regarding the cause of the gathering is satisfied.

. My pensioners appear many times a day; and at the hours for serving meals—morning, noon, and toward six o'clock in the evening-there are vociferous calls for me if I am at all behindhand with my preparations. On high days and holidays the bread is moistened with milk instead of water. and such an Epicurean gloating as there is over the festival dish! Even the seed-eating birds patronize it, though they usually show a very natural preference for the diet of sunflower and other seeds. Bits of apple, intended for the cottontails, and nuts for the squirrels, complete the bill of fare, but the Jolie-Queue and Rufus tribe appropriate portions of all the supplies, and carry away far more than they can eat. These acquisitive little creatures seem greatly to enjoy patting and fitting pieces of moist bread into convenient branch crotches; proceeding much after the manner of moulders in clay. At nearly all angles of the table d'hôte trees these strange little bread-puddings may be seen. There are also various other unnatural and uncanny maple-tree decorations suggestive of the work of an insane Santa Claus, but at least on one occasion they served an excellent purpose.

Summer before last toward the close of the season, a sudden and violent anti-grackle crusade was organized in our neighborhood. It was the

outcome of a raid of some of my protégés on poultry yards at a little distance from us, where food was strewn, apparently, after the hospitable manner of the table d'hôte. Perhaps the grackles looked upon the poultry yards as annexes to my establishment; at any rate they probably partook of the provisions with the same feeling of security with which they ate at my table. But alas, their confidence was one day rudely shaken, for a shower of shot fell in among them as they ate, and several were killed. Of course some escaped unhurt, while others made their way back to the grove, only in time to die among their beloved haunts.

You will not be surprised to hear that I looked in vain for grackles among my guests during the days that immediately followed the slaughter, though now and then I caught glimpses of their glistening coats as they stealthily passed from one sheltered part of the grove to another. I had about made up my mind that they would never again venture to join the happy little party at my restaurant, when, arising one morning at dawn, I surprised a flock of them in the table d'hôte trees. Not one ventured to the ground, but in among the protecting branches they were eagerly devouring the luscious bread-puddings with which Mr.

Rufus and Madame Jolie-Queue had so industriously stocked the trees on the previous evening. This stealthy performance continued for some days, the squirrels unwittingly serving meals upstairs for the frightened grackles; but the birds' confidence in me was finally restored, and this year they were among the earliest of my spring guests.

I know that various charges are brought against grackles (is anyone or anything free from aspersions, I wonder?)—the most serious, to my way of thinking, being that they eat young birds and eggs. Yet year after year robins and grackles nest harmoniously in the same tree near my windows, and I certainly have excellent opportunities for observing both the dear red-breasts and the black beauties. Only in one instance have I seen what suggested an unpleasantness between a grackle and some robins; and this was near the large bird-baths of the grove, at some distance from the homes in my tree. I have often speculated as to the exact meaning of the occurrence.

A grackle appeared at the bath, unmistakably in the custody of two robins; one on each side. Under their strict surveillance he was allowed to bathe, the robins waiting at the brink of the basin and eyeing him sternly as he performed his ablutions, and when he emerged the three disappeared as they had come; the grackle in the centre and the robin guard on each side.

Over in the honeysuckle vines, at a little distance from the table d'hôte, you will see a curious-looking object fastened, cocoon-like, in among a cluster of leafless twigs. My sister came upon it a few days ago while carefully inspecting the vines, and some little nature-loving friends of mine enlightened me as to its meaning. It is the egg-mass of the praying mantis; not our American species, but a foreigner recently introduced experimentally in our neighborhood. This is no doubt the very mantis religiosa which appeared to the devout St. Francis Xavier as he walked in his garden. "A great, winged insect, walking with head bent down, and forelegs stretched out and elevated in an attitude of prayer."

"He was much astonished at this circumstance," says the narrator of the incident, "but much more so on hearing the humble creature chant a beautiful canticle, after the custom of that period, with great solemnity." *

It was thus that the saint and mystic saw and

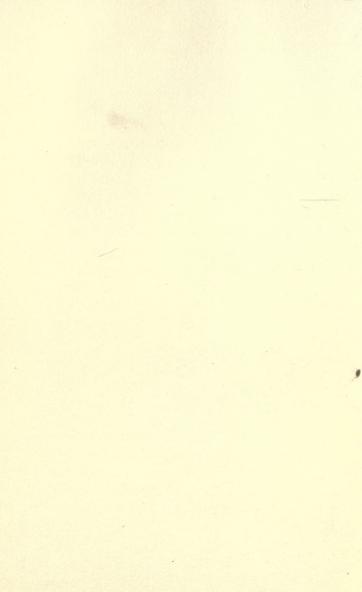
^{*} E. Van Bruyssel, in The Population of an Old Pear-Tree.

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heard the praying mantis, "but prayer is far from the object in view, as any small insect that happens within reach learns to his cost," says our accurate, scientific entomologist. "A sudden clasp wounds and crushes it into helplessness, and the mantis religiosa then leisurely devours its victim, the forelegs serving admirably as hands in the operation." *

Of course the entomologist is right, and the predacious little creature is bent only on securing its food, yet, when the praying mantis appears among the "Green Things upon the Earth," I shall try to hear with the mystic's ears the "beautiful canticle" blending with the songs of the "Powers of the Lord" that "praise Him and magnify Him forever."

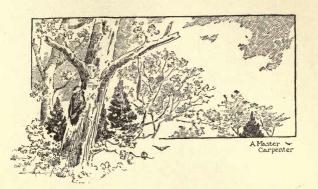
^{*} Prof. J. B. Smith, in Economic Entomology.



Love-Making and Home-Building

"Then the fields grew green with the springing corn,

And some with flowers were bright; And each day came with an earlier dawn And a fuller, sweeter light."



HAT an indescribable tenderness characterizes this beautiful April day! Light and shade are dreamily following each other over green hillsides, while soft white clouds drift about in azure depths. Summer trees are robed in delicate young leaves or attired in feathery, flowerlike leaf-heralds. Spruces are hung with embryo cones-tiny pink buds in which a blush rose might exult-and tips of lightest, softest hue relieve the sombreness of the dark evergreen boughs. Horsechestnut leaves have emerged from their varnished casings and cast aside the fleecy coverings in which the baby buds were so carefully enveloped. Without any leafy forewarning, the forsythias-like clusters of miraculous rods—have burst into a wealth of yellow blossoms; and scarlet buds are opening among the pyrus japonica leaves, while

modest little white flowers begin to peep from curving spirea arms. Dandelions dot the grassy stretches, and violets lift their heads in woodland places. The delicate fragrance of early blossoming fruit-trees mingles with the rich odor of magnolias, and the soft young grass in the neighborhood of these voluptuous beauties is strewn with petals scattered lavishly at the wind's call for largesse.

What tender things one hears among the birds during these beautiful wooing days. But not only in eager chirp and musical twitter, low warble and tender trill, may the sweet old story be told; for hoarse croak and plaintive squeak, discordant as they may sound to the ear of the uninitiated, may voice the sublimest sentiments of some little feathered lover's soul.

Up in yonder lofty pine is a purple grackle's nest. I watched the beautiful couple as they coquetted and wooed, and surveyed the premises; spluttering, squeaking, and screeching out their sentiments. Now and then, by way of extra emphasis, hunching their shoulders and swelling out their feathers until neck, wings, body, and tail seemed hopelessly out of joint. But with what amazing ease do they subside after one of these

astounding acrobatic feats. It would seem as if a preening of an hour would hardly suffice to restore the ruffled costume to its usual sleekness and trimness. Yet even as the croak or squeak dies away, the feathers fall into place again, and the beautiful violet and green and purple and bronze lights play once more over the smoothest and glossiest of coats.

It was with a strange sense of exultation that I saw bits of nest-material of my own providing—small strips of muslin and short strings—disappearing among the highest of these pine-branches—a subtle link between the children of the air and a dweller on the earth. Day after day I watched the skilful masons and builders as they gathered the soft mud from the roadside and carried it to their tree-top home. But though the beautiful pine-tassels nod and sway as if in friendly approval of my interest, they keep the secret of what goes on within their shelter.

Only a few moments ago all seemed peaceful and harmonious in the grove. What is, then, the meaning of this sudden uproar? Who are these wild skirmishers and whither are they bound?

I recognize this commotion. It is what Mr. Burroughs calls a "robin racket." "Trains of

three or four birds rushing pell-mell over the lawn and fetching up in a tree or bush, or occasionally upon the ground, all piping and screaming at the top of their voices, but whether in mirth or anger it is hard to tell. The nucleus of the train is a female. One cannot see that the males in pursuit of her are rivals; it seems rather as if they had united to hustle her out of the place. But somehow the matches are no doubt made and sealed during these mad rushes. Maybe the female shouts out to her suitors, 'Who touches me first wins,' and away she scurries like an arrow. The males shout out, 'Agreed!' and away they go in pursuit, each trying to outdo the other. The game is a brief one. Before one can get the clue to it the party has dispersed." *

Those interesting manifestations which Mr. Burroughs calls "robin duels" are much in vogue earlier in the season. I have frequently heard hasty observers speak of them as courtship parades; being under the mistaken impression that the promenaders were male and female; but these "pretty sparring matches" are participated in by males only. "You may see two robins apparently taking a walk or a run together over the sward

or along the road; only first one bird runs and then the other. They keep a few feet apart, stand very erect, and the course of each describes the segment of an arch about the other.

"How courtly and deferential their manners toward each other are. Often they pipe a shrill, fine strain, audible only a few yards away. Then in a twinkling one makes a spring and they are beak to beak and claw to claw as they rise up a few feet into the air. But usually no blow is delivered; not a feather is ruffled; each, I suppose, finds the guard of the other perfect. Then they will settle down and go through with the same running challenge as before. Often they will run about each other in this way for many rods." *

The "racket" has subsided and the quieter voices may again be heard, but above them all rises a sound as of vigorous hammering and rapid drilling. Let us follow the resounding clue to see if we can discover the little carpenters in the very act of constructing their home. We must proceed with caution, however, for even the most fearless of woodland folk are apt to become wary and stealthy when it is a question of concealing

^{*} Mr. John Burroughs, in Riverby.

the little habitations they are preparing, or of shielding their young from discovery.

Now we are very near the sound. I think an observation halt will be of advantage to us at this stage of the proceedings. Here is a hospitable spruce in whose strong lower arms I have many a time found a comfortable resting-place and the seclusion required for just such investigating occasions as the present.

High up on the main trunk of yonder half-decayed old maple I see a brownish-gray bird. He is flattened against the tree, and he rests on his dark, stiffly spread tail, which is firmly braced against the bark. A red crescent at the back of a gray head moves rapidly as hammer and drill are called into requisition. We have often sighted the handsome flicker as he flew about the grove and searched for food in the tree-trunks or on the ground. Now we are fortunate enough to come upon him while he is at work on the opening that represents the front door of his house.

There is life in the old maple yet, as a few budding branches still testify, but there is decay enough to make the puncturing of the bark and the work of excavation a comparatively easy task for these powerful bills. The woodpeckers are

too wise to select for their homes a tree with a natural cavity. Their choice falls upon one that "has been dead just long enough to have become brittle throughout."

How wonderful is the economy of nature! After the woodpeckers have had their one-season lease of a house their cousins, the nut-hatches, chickadees, and brown creepers "fall heir" to the nests. "These birds, especially the creepers and nut-hatches, have many of the habits of the picidae, but lack their powers of bill, and so are unable to excavate a nest for themselves. Their habitation, therefore, is always second-hand. But each species carries in some soft material of various kinds, or, in other words, furnishes the tenement to its liking." *

Now our feathered friend halts and examines his work. See him as with head drawn back he critically surveys the growing excavation, first from this side and then from that, as a Turner might inspect a painting or a Worth a "creation." I fancy that no little complacency enters into the architect's contemplation of his own workmanship. False humility will not interfere with his appreciation of its good points, neither will foolish

^{*} Mr. John Burroughs, in Wake Robin.

pride keep him from recognizing and rectifying any errors he may have made in constructing the abode which is to shelter his dear ones. Their comfort and safety are his first consideration.

But see; although he still remains flattened against the tree, he suddenly looks away from his work and seems to be gazing in our direction. Has he discovered us, and does he resent our presence? Is that prolonged stare a gentle intimation that the neighborhood is not large enough to accommodate us all?

Ah, no, he heeds us not. It is of another voice that he is taking note. He is listening to that loud rapid quick-quick-quick-quick-quick-quick. And now a bird with widespread, golden-lined wings makes its way toward the old maple. Is this the architect's mate? Yes, she alights beside him—before closing her wings giving us an opportunity to note the distinctive family mark, a conspicuous white patch at the base of the tail. Now two red crescents appear beside the opening in the tree. Two gray heads turn from side to side in affectionate inspection of the progress of the work; but only on the cheeks of the first worker do we see the black patches by which one recognizes the male. Yet I fancy that, even had we not

sighted these masculine badges, the husband's loving, chivalrous demeanor would have enabled us to place him.

Listen to their pleasant confidential chat. How unlike the rapid, business-like call of a moment ago. The conversational notes of a flicker may not be altogether musical—to me they always suggest the rapid rubbing of a moistened finger over smooth glass—but there is a certain sweetness, a mellowness about them, nevertheless, and how much congeniality of taste and harmony of opinion are represented in the discussion under way! It is as if he were saying, "Now do not hesitate to advise or criticise, dear. The house is to be constructed according to your liking, and I shall be satisfied only when you are pleased."

But evidently she has no fault to find. I think I hear her cooing out a loving approval of everything; perhaps bestowing an especial measure of praise on our architect's last touches.

Now we hear more rubbing of the smooth glass—at this juncture it probably represents kissing—and away he flies, while she takes up the work of hammering and drilling.

Let us mark the tree for future observation; it will be interesting to follow the fortunes of this

happy couple; and now, as noiselessly as possible, let us steal away from our hiding-place and follow on toward the wildest part of the grove.

In this bit of the forest there is no interference with the wild bent of either tree or underbrush, and nature liberally rewards this reverent regard for her moods and fancies. Here we find such harmony, such restfulness, such a sense of remoteness, such suggestions of forest depth, as one rarely obtains except in the genuine wilds. It is like Anthony Trollope's ideal wood, "purposeless." The mind can conceive that it has "never been planted by hands, but has come here from the direct beneficence of the Creator—as the first woods did come—before man had been taught to recreate them systematically." *

Here and there you note that several boughs have been gathered into large heaps; but even in this assemblage of the storm-broken branches—an apparently inconsistent orderly touch—there is a thought of preserving the manners and customs of wild life. The shy little creatures who frequent this region rejoice in these forest-like shelters; these vantage-points from which they may safely see without being seen.

* Anthony Trollope, in A Walk in a Wood.

And behold, is it not, as if in considerate corroboration of my statement, that that forest recluse, the hermit-thrush, suddenly appears among the piled-up branches just before us? He is no doubt making his way to some forest north of us, but what an honor to have had him even halt here. His very presence breathes calm and mystery. One feels instinctively that his dwelling is in holy places.

"I know that I have fallen upon the sacred hour when the song of the woods is a prayer," says one in speaking of this voice as heard in forest solitudes. "There is a strain in this note that was never caught under blue skies and in the safe nesting of the familiar fields. It is the voice of solitude suddenly breaking into sound; it is the speech of that other world so near our doors and yet removed from us by uncounted centuries and unexplored experiences." *

Not here, lest we disturb our rare little guest, but as we move slowly on toward the secular, every-day portions of the grove, I will tell you of some of the homely purposes served by the brushheaps at my summer feeding site.

You noted them, one under the dining-room *Mr. Hamilton W. Mabie, in Under the Trees and Elsewhere.

maples, another at the foot of a large spruce not far distant from the first shelter. Both brushheaps rest on a carpet of dead leaves—a method of furnishing entirely to the wood-thrushes' liking-and the broken branches are so heavily packed and so closely intertwined that none but the little people of the wood can penetrate them. I do not think it would be possible for a cat or the smallest dog to enter this maze; and birds of prey seem averse to venturing so near our dwelling. Occasionally, while the little friends are all assembled at the table d'hôte some watchful member of the feathered company will sight an enemy taking observations from sky or tree-top vantagepoints. Instantly a note of alarm will be sounded, when presto, as if by enchantment, every bird disappears and nothing but an innocent-looking, noncommittal brush-heap is to be seen.

After a time a cautious delegate peeps out from the shelter, and if nothing formidable is in sight he gives a reassuring call; whereupon again, as if by magic, the banqueting hall is furnished with guests and the interrupted chatter and feasting are resumed.

I may be mistaken, but I think that a certain little song-sparrow couple are considering one of

my brush-heaps as a possible building-site. And the junco with the injured wing seems also favorably impressed with the advantages of the shelter, and inspects it frequently in company with an able-bodied junco lady, whom he has evidently persuaded to abandon foreign travel and induced to settle down with him as a grove permanent. This is indeed an innovation, but I can fancy how a bird of impaired wing-power would appreciate the advantages of an all-the-year residence such as the grove affords. No doubt visions of northern forest freshness and coolness appeal powerfully to these little creatures—one the victim of a misfortune, the other evidently an exile for love's sake-but I am certain that no time will be wasted in useless regrets or foolish complaints. Birds are Spartans and philosophers.

The white-crowns, although registered as rare winter migrants, still patronize the table d'hôte, and are among the most confiding of my visitors. Great English-sparrow disciplinarians are these same sturdy little fellows of the handsome head-dresses. Indeed, to the frequent and vigorous feather-tweakings—hair-pulling equivalents, no doubt—which the white-crowns administer impartially to all English-sparrow habitués of the

table d'hôte, I am inclined to attribute the present chastened demeanor and humble behavior of the latter feathered folk. Even the chippies—who, by the way, have appeared in full force—seem to know that they may safely assert themselves in the presence of any little Briton of the neighborhood.

To return to the mention of the brush-heaps. Welcome as their shelter is to the little people of the wood in general, by none is it more appreciated than by the defenceless cottontails. At the slightest alarm the startled creatures will make for the protecting mounds, one white-lined tail after another disappearing in the intricacies of the brush tangle, until not a trace of the silent little creatures remains.

But even as I say silent there comes to my remembrance the words of the prophet of the Wild Things regarding this very matter.

"Truly rabbits have no speech as we understand it, but they have a way of conveying ideas by a system of sounds, signs, scents, whisker touches, movements, and examples that answer the purpose of speech." *

^{*}Mr. Ernest Seton-Thompson, in Wild Animals I Have Known.

I must tell you that even the shy flickers have appeared at my table d'hôte recently. I cannot say that they partake of my provisions, but at any rate they mingle with the guests and carefully inspect the sward under our windows. After all, it does not seem as if my practice of regular feeding can be working harm to any form of vegetation in our neighborhood. New birds are constantly appearing, and the staff of tree and shrub inspectors increases daily.

Over in yonder larch-tree—the one with the picturesque couvre-pied of scilla—I see a pair of robins with housekeeping intentions. Evidently the prerogative of selecting a site belongs to the lady in this case, for Mrs. Redbreast goes in advance, testing twigs and examining branches, while her mate meekly follows in her wake.

Judging by indications of this kind, I am to have robins for very near neighbors. The birds have not proceeded beyond mere preliminaries, as the leafy covering is still too scant; but it is evident that the maples near my front windows have found favor with one couple at least.

Do you note that light and shade no longer follow each other over the green hillsides? Everything lies in shadow now, for soft gray clouds

brood over the earth and showers are on their way.

Here are the first rain-drops, the earliest of the gentle heralds. Let us take refuge under this little summer shelter and wait for the clearing. It cannot be long delayed.

Even though you and I are watching closely, we cannot detect that any change is taking place in leaf or bud or blade of grass; yet after the shower is over we will exclaim: "What strides vegetation has taken; what a marvel has occurred. Leaves have expanded, buds have opened, the grass has grown as if by miracle. How was the wonder brought about?"

Now and then, as if in playful condescension, nature shows us a sudden marvel. The flower of the moon plant opens with a tiny explosion. The evening primrose "leaps" from "buds into ripe flowers," and the night-blooming cereus unfolds before our eyes, but as a rule the great mother's workings are so stealthy, so secret, that we cannot tell how or when results are achieved.

How pleasant the smell of the moistened earth. How musical the sound of the gently falling rain. Its cadence is like an echo from an old Hebrew poem:

Thou visitest the earth and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side.

The pastures are covered with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.



At Peep of Day

"The phantom flood of dreams has ebbed and vanished with the dark,

And like a dove the heart forsakes the prison of the ark;

Now forth she fares through friendly woods and diamond-fields of dew,

While every voice cries out 'Rejoice' as if the world were new."

DR. HENRY VAN DYKE.



HE reveille has sounded. That single clear, penetrating robin note announces the opening of day in bird-land. Only half-past three of the clock as hours are reckoned with us, but it is time to be stirring if we would attend matins in the grove. The forms of the celebrants are shrouded in the misty gray of early morning, but no shadowy veil can intercept the glorious voices. For one brief instant only the intoner's notes were heard; now his voice blends with the songs of hundreds of his kind. But even in the swelling of the chorus it is possible to recognize many distinct bands of musicians, and an occasional lull or ebb of song secures a hearing for the sweet small voices whose value is not recognized in the universal chorus, though the great harmonious whole would be incomplete without them.

Those wonderful flute-like notes with their

tremulous accompaniment so suggestive of the lingering vibrations of stringed instruments, represent the wood-thrush portion of the choir; for the friendly little travellers have returned to the waiting forest-nook.

Now we hear the Baltimore oriole's ringing, clarion-like notes, and a rippling, rollicking, musical outburst from a cat-bird. There is an exquisite orchard oriole rhapsody, and now, thanks to a momentary lull, an aria from a warbling vireo reaches us, and we hear a gentle song-sparrow's ecstatic hymn and an enthusiastic little trill from a chippie. But the chorus-tide turns again, and stronger voices once more overpower the weaker in the great volume of song that even the grackles' harsh notes cannot make inharmonious. In fact they serve as a species of sub-structure; a sort of rough but substantial foundation for the beautiful edifice that rests upon them.

Hosts of transients making a halt of a few hours, or perhaps a few days, in the grove, add their hymns of praise to the joyful songs of birds that are nesting with us; but above and beyond all other voices rise the redbreasts' familiar notes. Lowell pronounced a chorus of robins "unrivalled, as like primitive fire worshippers they hail

the return of light and warmth to the world." They are telling only of cheer and of present gladness: "Singing like the poets without an afterthought," and it is no minor chord in the carol itself, but some subtle association with the robin's song, that so often fills the human listener's heart with wistful sadness.

And now, are you not conscious of another melody blending with the songs of birds? It is the harmony of fragrance. The flower-forms are still indistinct in the grayness, but their musical greetings are wafted to us on the dewy air. There is a general mingling of fragrance as there was of song, but with the flowers, as with the birds, an occasional voice more potent than its fellows reaches us with unusual distinctness. Even the tender grass has its own fragrant little utterance.

How fleeting the glories of the beautiful "lilactide." No perfume of either purple or white blossom reaches us now from yonder hedge where, but a short time ago, both beauties appeared in such profusion. The magnolia-trees have cast aside their bloom and clad themselves in luxuriant foliage, while upon the fruit-trees, so recently covered with a "foam of blossoms," scarcely a flower

is to be found. Would we love the time of "riotous blossoming" so well were it less brief?

Noiselessly but steadily the day has been advancing, but now it is almost with haste that night's shadows disappear before the pale light in the east. The mist that but a short time ago enveloped us, and in its passing touched with silvery moisture each leaf, blossom, and blade of grass, now lingers around the river only. And see, with the lifting of the shadows both flower and birdforms come to view. In the woodsy wildness just behind us little spring beauties are sleeping, but violets—open-eved and watchful—look up from sheltering tree-bases; and on beyond, under the last of the pines that line the path to the flowergarden, we see spreading sweet shrubs, with their exquisitely fragrant little brown blossoms nestling close to the mother twig. How delightfully suggestive of sun-warmed pineapples and strawberries and all sorts of enticing spicy and elusive odors are these same inconspicuous little brown blossoms.

A few proud tulips—gorgeous reds and yellows—still hold their court in yonder striped grass tangle; and, over the way on the other side of the

fountain, as if in rebuke for such a barbaric display of color, the delicately tinted flower-deluce lifts its stately head. But stationed midway (as if to keep the peace) are graceful spireas in feathery bloom and companies of peonies, some bursting into blossom, others displaying only buds among their rich leaf masses.

From the shelter of their cool, protecting, shrine-like leaves, the spotless lilies-of-the-valley rise, as if for prayerful meditation; but just bevond their precincts I see an array of dear, mischievous, roguish little faces; the winning, affectionate johnny-jump-ups or ladies' delights. These are flowers upon which I never again can look without a sympathetic thought of the touching mention made of them by the author of "Old-Time Gardens." She says: "Ladies' delights and ambrosia tell us, without words, of their love for us and longing to be by our side; just as plainly as a child silently tells of his love and dependence on us by taking our hand as we walk side by side. There is not another gesture of childhood, not an affectionate word which ever touched my heart as did that trustful holding of the hand. One of my children throughout his brief life never walked by my

side without clinging closely—I think without conscious intent—with his little hand in mine. I can never forget the affection, the trust of that vanished hand." *

The feathered folk are flitting about among the branches now; a happy, harmonious company. But hark! What is the meaning of that sudden commotion in yonder tree-top? What stranger has alighted there? The occasional unwieldy flapping of large wings suggests that their owner finds it difficult to steady himself on the slender bough that he has chosen for a halting-place. A grackle makes a graceful finish for the steeple branch of a spruce, but a crow seems all out of place on such a delicate perch.

Yet after all there is a certain fitness in our sable friend's selection of a commanding post, for he comes in an official capacity. As town-clerk or court-crier he calls out, in loud, peremptory tones:

WORK! WORK! WORK!

Is it because his discordant notes are a discouragement to the musicians, or because a great, fiery ball in the east announces the full opening of day,

* Mrs. Alice Morse Earle.

that there is a sudden and decided falling off in the chorus, a very perceptible lessening in the great volume of song?

I realize now that I had almost unconsciously arranged for myself a sort of forecast of this sunrise. As the monarch's earliest heralds I had looked for long, slender, rose-colored streaks, which were to grow and grow until the heavens became one effulgence, while the river was to have caught and held the glory till it vanished before the sun's full glow.

But instead of this, without any intimation of his coming other than the vanishing grayness, the glorious red ball suddenly looks out through the rapidly retreating mists.

Though nature's laws are in a sense inviolable, though seed-time and harvest, sunrise and sunset will succeed each other as long as the world lasts, yet the great mother has constant surprises in store for us, and no one can anticipate her moods or her movements where her fixed laws are not concerned. The individuality that characterizes even the most obscure of her creatures is one of her own greatest attributes; and it has been said that, during all the ages in which the sun has run his course, the sky-settings have not been identical

on any two occasions either of his coming or his going.

Less and less song; more and more work. There a robin redbreast halts to sing his

Cheery, cheery,
Be cheery, be cheery.
I like cherries.
Don't you, Deary?

but nearly all his little companions are looking around for food-supplies. The oriole still utters his sweet, clear notes, but they come like musical drops now, singly or in couplets, and they are uttered during leaf and twig investigations. The great food-quest, the grub and insect exterminating crusade has begun.

How much of woodland life the full light reveals. Just overhead I catch a glimpse of a yellow-billed cuckoo; and there, against the trunk of that nearest maple, a sapsucker's beautiful red crown appears. Now a sight of the goldfinch in his undulating flight accompanies those waves of song. As for this plump little object, which a few moments ago we might have passed unheeded or mistaken for a small stump, it now develops into a friendly cottontail. How very worn and moth-eaten the remnant of the winter coat looks

in comparison with the fine new fur, showing here and there among the old.

Seeing these demure little creatures in their guarded attitudes only, one would never imagine what fun-loving sprites they are. I sometimes come upon them in the moonlight hours, at which time they are said to be particularly partial to gambols and frolics; but the wildest rabbit tournament I ever witnessed was in the mid-afternoon. of a gray day a week or so ago. I was entirely in evidence, but for this they seemed not to care in the least. The joust took place directly over in the grassy, shady space which the carriage-drive encircles. There were about a dozen participants, I should say, though their continual and rapid changing of position made accurate counting a difficult, not to say an impossible, matter. I fancied that the company was divided into aggressive and defensive parties; at any rate, from opposite directions they came, jumping and bounding toward each other; sometimes leaping three feet or more into the air, a particularly valiant knight occasionally vaulting clean over the head of his antagonist. Short, low bounds were also in vogue, and there were chases and skirmishes and boxing matches, and exuberant, kitten-like demonstra-

tions of playfulness, but of all the merry sports the running high-jump was certainly the most popular.

The more secluded brush-heaps are favorite rabbit nurseries, but now and then an innocent-looking little roughness in the turf of the open represents the fur-lined nest of some happy cottontail couple. On rare occasions, when we are certain that our investigations will not cause a panic, we give ourselves the treat of a peep at the plump little furry balls in their cosy shelter. But usually the parents have the satisfaction of thinking their sweet secret undiscovered.

You remember our carpenter friends the flickers? Let us wander toward the old maple where we saw them working so industriously. There is a surprise in store for you in that quarter. You think you anticipate it? A sight of the devoted parents carrying food to a family of funny, awkward, half-clad babies, hidden safely away in the heart of the tree? But that is not what I would show you. About two and a half feet below the excavation at which the flickers were working with such apparent pride and satisfaction when you saw them last, you note another opening, a more recent excavation. The little carpenters

have abandoned the earlier site, and are now devoting all their energies to the construction of this newer home. The male is working at present, you see, and now and then he appears at the door with a chip in his beak. Sometimes he recklessly casts his shavings away and gives no heed to their course, but at other times he puts his head far out and carefully watches the falling chips. Is this idle curiosity merely, or is he anxious to note whether the tell-tale bits of wood land in betraying places or in paths suspiciously near the home tree?

It was by tokens of this kind—an abundance of tiny chips strewn around a maple-tree base—that I discovered a cleverly hidden flicker nest a few days ago. The lord and master of the establishment was evidently not a bird of honor like our earlier acquaintance. I watched this newer friend for fully ten minutes as he sat idly looking out his front door—an action not necessarily blameworthy in itself, but reprehensible in view of what followed. During his wife's absence he was taking a complete holiday, but when her loud quick - quick - quick - quick - quick - quick - quick gave warning of her approach he fell to work with deceitful energy, and when she appeared on

the scene the chips were flying at an astonishing rate. Perhaps she accosted him with: "You you must not work so recklessly, dear; you will be ill. Now take your well-earned rest and leave all thought of toil to me for the present."

But to return to the case of our own flickers; the constructors of the two homes. What caused them to abandon the earlier site after having bestowed so much time and labor on its excavation? When the interior was finally reached did it prove unsatisfactory? Were the walls unsound? Did the roof leak? These and many other like questions I have asked myself again and again without being able to arrive at any definite conclusion. Had the builders gone to an entirely new locality, their departure might have been ascribed to panic or the presence of troublesome neighbors, or perhaps to a general dissatisfaction with the old maple. But what can be the meaning of a second excavation in the self-same shaft, removed from the first opening by about two feet only?

Yet this is not the first instance in which a flicker has been known to drill superfluous cavities. In "Riverby" Mr. Burroughs tells us of a flicker who "drills into buildings and steeples and telegraph poles."

"One season the large imitation Greek columns of an unoccupied old-fashioned summer residence near me were badly marred by these birds," he writes. A flicker "bored into one column, and finding the cavity—a foot or more across—not just what it was looking for, cut into another one and still into another. Then he bored into the icehouse on the premises, and in the sawdust filling between the outer and inner sheathing found a place to his liking."

Another flicker "seemed like a monomaniac, and drilled holes up and down and right and left as if possessed of an evil spirit. . . . It may have been that he was an unmated bird, a bachelor whose suit had not prospered that season, and who was giving vent to his outraged instincts in drilling these mock nesting places." *

A tin leader at the northwest corner of our house—one of several pipes that conduct rainwater from the roof—was recently selected by a flicker for his drumming purposes. This rapid, rolling tattoo, played upon some resounding substance, is the male woodpecker's courtship call. It was perhaps half-past four in the morning when I was awakened by a reverberating noise

^{*} Mr. John Burroughs, in Riverby.

proceeding from the corner where the leader runs. The strange sound suggested the dragging of heavy, casterless furniture over bare floors, and was accompanied by something of a vibration not unlike that which marks the course of a slight earthquake. I was at first much perplexed by the occurrence, but before I could reach the window I heard the rapid call of a flicker, and a moment later I saw the handsome stranger. At sight of me he ceased drumming and flew away, so whether his suit prospered or not I cannot say. We are told that in bird-land the males outnumber the females, and that bachelors are a possibility; but a bird spinster is said to be a rara avis indeed.

Mr. Burroughs says it is probable that the male woodpecker accepts the first female that offers herself in response to the drum-call. "Among all the birds the choice, the selection, seems to belong to the female. The males court promiscuously; the females choose discreetly.

. . What determines the choice of the female it would be hard to say. Among song-birds it is probably the best songster, or the one whose voice suits her taste best. Among birds of bright plumage it is probably the gayest dress; among

the drummers she is doubtless drawn by some quality of the sound. Our ears and eyes are too coarse to note differences in these things, but doubtless the birds themselves note differences."*

A beautiful bronzed grackle has just disappeared in the hemlock beyond the flicker maple. His beak was filled to overflowing with dainties for his hungry babies. Wait and they themselves will reveal their whereabouts.

Squawk, Squawk, Squeak! Croak, croak, creak!

Strange to say, these agonizing sounds represent eager anticipation, delightful realization, and every other pleasant thing you may choose to picture to yourself in the line of happy, clamorous nursery table-talk.

A stealthy stirring in that blossom cascade yonder would suggest the presence of a bird-home in the wistaria-vine, and as for these hedges, in bird-land they seem to be the equivalent of a popular residence quarter among human beings. The gardener told me recently that he plies his huge shears with positive dread around these great walls of osage orange and privet. Little

homes are so plentiful here that it requires the greatest watchfulness not to harm them during a trimming tour.

Take a peep through the stubbly, thickly matted shoots and branches at these four mites in the little hair-lined nest. Unlike the great majority of young birds they are not all heads, and the tiny beaks that open so confidingly at our approach are quite in proportion to the dainty frames. But see, peeping out through the green arch through which we have just passed is an anxious little chippy mother begging us to go our way that she may give her babies their breakfast. We will not investigate any more hedge-homes at present. This is a busy and important hour in the nurseries of featherdom, and it would be cruel to keep the little ones waiting for their food.

Those fluffy dandelion balls seem to have great attractions for the English and chipping sparrows. See how cleverly the little creatures nip the seeds and cast aside the miniature sails that would have floated away with the tiny germs to some other corner of nature's garden.

But there is a little bird who seems to have other than food purposes for the dandelion top. With one swoop he gathers a beakful of the fluffy

stuff, and the pale button at the top of the hollow stem is now quite bare. This wholesale gathering represents somebody's nest-lining.

Let us take a stroll toward the front entrance of the grove in order to obtain a glimpse of the deserted street. It is not probable that anyone is stirring at this hour.

But instead of solitude we find a host of busy little folk. Would you have believed it possible that, right out upon a public sidewalk where by and by scores of hurried human feet will pass, such an assemblage of comparatively shy birds could have made themselves so thoroughly at home?

True, the robin is ever fearless and friendly, but now he is almost intrusive. And there are orchard orioles examining critically the lowest branches of the maples that line the public thoroughfare; while Baltimore orioles calmly view us from their halting-places on the fence, bronzed grackles strut complacently around the grassy borders, and wood-thrushes are inspecting crevices in the brick pavement. One of the little brown beauties is deeply interested in a large, soft bit of Japanese wrapping-paper that has drifted in among the fence-railings. See her as she turns

it over and examines it carefully. Now she takes her flight, but the paper trails through the air after her. Back into the grove she goes, over toward the wood-thrush corner; let us follow her. That flaunting bit of paper is to be the foundation for her nest. A strange choice, is it not? But Mr. Burroughs tells us that the wood-thrush has a curious habit "of starting its nest with a fragment of newspaper or other paper. Except in remote woods I think it always puts a piece of paper in the foundation of its nest."

This is certainly a secret-disclosing hour. The little creatures of the woods seem wonderfully off their guard. Perhaps they have some intuition of the love and reverence with which we look upon these sacred scenes. A beautiful robin carrying a beakful of building material has just entered that tall elm; and a cat-bird on a similar errand disappears in the intricacies of the hedge.

But on beyond is a nook of revelations to which I would lead you. It is a place that I have fairly haunted since our April-day stroll. Its trees, its hedges, its low underbrush tangle, its shade, its security, and its nearness to the little pools where feathered bathers congregate—all

these qualifications serve to make it the most desirable of halting-places. The little junco couple appear rarely at the table d'hôte nowadays, but I come upon them frequently in this forest-corner. They are no doubt influenced by the shyness of nesting-time, and in this shelter they probably find many of the conditions to which they are accustomed in summer sites of northern lands. A pair of white-crowned sparrows have remained with us, but all their friendly little fellows, as well as their genial white-throated cousins, have left for the north. It was when this month was very young that I last heard the white-throat's sweet plaintive whistle. It seemed to say, farewell till the snows, till the snows, till the Snowy.

This little bird's note always conjures up for me a strange, sweet picture. I see a great stretch of rolling prairie upon which the shades of evening are gently falling. A clear little stream ripples and dances over a pebbly bed, and toward this stream, cropping the long dewy grass as she goes, a tired horse slowly makes her way. She is riderless and free from harness trammels. She may wander far over the grassy stretches during the cool night hours, but her quick ear will catch

her beloved master's first call, and back she will hasten at his bidding, no matter how far she may have strayed.

The master lies on the ground over yonder, wrapped in his protecting blanket, for the heavy dews are falling and he has no shelter. His hat is drawn down over his brow, but from under the soft rim he gazes up into the sky from which the last of the sunset lights are fading. Never has it seemed so vast to him as now, and, though he knows no fear, a great sense of loneliness takes possession of him. An overpowering consciousness of remoteness, of vastness, and aloneness. Here he was to have found shelter and human companionship, but through some misunderstanding his comrades have failed him. Like himself, they are searchers for treasure hidden in the earth's heart, and they are perhaps not many miles away, but a night search for them would be perilous and fruitless. The traveller must wait for the day.

As the twilight deepens, the loneliness grows more intense and oppressive. No sound breaks the solemn stillness. The man hears not even the ripple of the dancing stream; it is too remote. If sleep would only come!

But see, there is movement. A little bird alights on a twig beside him. The human form is dusky in the twilight and for a time the little creature views the stranger in wondering silence, but suddenly the prairie stillness is broken. Sweet and clear rings out the white-throat's song. The traveller had often heard the voice and ever greeted it gladly, but never before was it half so welcome as now.

Traveller, go to sleep, go to sleep, go to sleep.

Heaven its watch doth keep, watch doth keep,

watch doth keep,

sang again and again the sweet, trustful, little voice; but how often the tired man never knew, for sleep came as he listened, and when he awoke the morning had dawned and the gloom had departed.

And so had the little bird, yet the traveller was not alone; for, gazing down upon him in wonder and perplexity, stood a strange company: a large herd of antelopes. They were probably on their way to the little stream when the unusual object met their view. The man's hat, his garments, and even his blanket were of the soft dun color of an antelope. "Who is this creature so

strangely like ourselves?" may have been the question the beautiful eyes were asking, as they gazed and gazed upon the prostrate form. "Will he harm us? Are we foolish to linger?" Yet, with the curiosity of wild things concerning unusual objects, they came nearer and nearer until they almost touched the man.

The hunter's instinct stirred mightily within the traveller as he looked at the lovely creatures. His gun lay beside him; his hand was almost upon it. Should he fire?

He gazed a moment longer into the beautiful, wondering, innocent eyes, then suddenly raised a harmless, empty hand. At the quick gesture the frightened creatures turned and fled. The man rose and watched until the last of the flock had disappeared, and the feeling that he experienced as he gazed was something nobler than the exultation of a successful hunter.

A long, loud whistle was answered by a familiar whinny; and in a short time the horse, refreshed and eager to continue the journey, came galloping up to her master.

After the usual greetings were over the traveller mounted, and his horse bore him to the top of the highest eminence of the entire region.

From this point, miles away, he could see the peaks of his companions' tents.

One backward glance at the spot where he had passed the night, then horse and rider went on their way, and the place saw them no more; but the memory of the little ministering bird and of the beautiful wild visitors of the morning remains with the traveller, and, though the story takes some time in the telling, the whole panorama passes before my mind's eye in the space of a white-throat's song.

But I must tell you of other visions that have come to me in this nook of revelations. One day it was a little bird of glowing orange and striking black, with white markings: the beautiful Blackburnian warbler, a creature once seen never to be forgotten. Other members of the warbler family—palm, magnolia, blackpoll, worm-eating, black-and-white creeping, yellow, and I cannot say how many others—have visited the spot as I sat and watched. And oh! the hopeless number that I have not been able to identify! Sometimes I brought from my upward-gazing quest nothing but an aching neck, yet who can tell what foundation for future success was laid in these apparently fruitless investigations. Our

pioneer woman bird-student says: "One must be content to let some things remain unknown, and enjoy what he can understand if he would be happy with nature. And if at some future time—as often happens—the mystery is solved, the joy is great enough to pay for waiting." *

The redstarts have been so numerous that opportunities for observing them have been excellent. Mr. Chapman says that "in Cuba most of our wood warblers are known as 'Mariposas'—butterflies; but the redstart's bright plumage has won for him the name of 'Candelita,' the little torch that flashes in the gloomy depths of tropical forests."

A pair of Maryland yellow-throats seem to be nesting here—their "witchery, witchery" is frequently heard in this sequestered nook—and yesterday I listened to a delightful vaudeville performance from a yellow-breasted chat, who was passing this way.

But the most gorgeous of all the visions came with a company of scarlet tanagers. I fairly held my breath as I saw the palpitating red of the beautiful creatures against the pale young green

^{*} Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller, in Upon the Tree-Tops.

of the low trees among which they were flitting. They were like scarlet flowers in motion. I have sometimes seen in a geranium or a gladiolus something of the wonderful tint of this glowing little body. In the sunlight it is positively dazzling.

I followed the brilliant company from one point to another, until at last they flew over to the maples of my table d'hôte. Ah, what distinguished guests I had that day! A maid who has recently come to us from the Emerald Isle and whose mind and heart are filled with tender memories of thrushes and linnets, "Jenny Wrens" and "real redbreasts," skylarks and "stone crackers," and all the familiar feathered folk of the old country, was within call when the tanagers alighted in the table d'hôte trees. I summoned her and pointed out the glowing beauties. First awed silence, then low, rapturous exclamations! Never, never before had she seen such a wonderful sight. No old-world bird could compare with these glorious American strangers. We gazed and gazed until they left us to return to this quiet forest-nook, and after a few days they were no more to be seen in any part of the grove.

Perhaps a little less than a week ago, as I sat

quietly watching from this inviting rustic seat. a dainty little humming-bird flew by and alighted on the brier-bush just opposite; and I had the satisfaction of seeing the little jewel make her toilet. It was the daintiest, most fairy-like performance imaginable. First she darted out a long, bristle-like tongue, and then she proceeded to preen the exquisite plumage. Sometimes, with the long beak, separating the tiny breast-feathers, again smoothing and putting them in place as the bristle-like tongue darted in and out among them. Suddenly she darted off, and gave chase to a tiny insect, which she captured; then returned to her post and resumed her toilet-making. I watched her until she flew away and was lost to sight among the trees, and I can assure you that on my return to the house it was with no small sense of exultation that I reported my good fortune in having seen a humming-bird in her dressing-room.

One other little vision I must mention; such a simple thing that you will perhaps wonder why I place it among the rare sights of this nook. You see a cluster of violets over at yonder pine-tree's base? As I sat here yesterday a wood-thrush halted just at the point where a bunch of the

little wild flowers rested against his soft dotted breast. The blending of the wood-thrush colorings with the violet was one of the most harmonious combinations on which my eyes have ever rested. It is nothing to tell, but the vision is one to remember with gladness.

The great-crested flycatchers love this haunt, and from this point they also fly over to the table d'hôte. I heard a loud call among the brush-heap maples some days ago, and hurried to the window for a glimpse of the visitor. It was the great-crest. For a while he investigated the trees, then alighted on the roof of the piazza just in front of my outlook window. Such a delightful show of innocent vanity and artless self-appreciation as I witnessed during the few moments that he halted! With his handsome crested head at an angle to enable him to look over his shoulder at his widespread, drooping tail, he was viewing himself with charming complacency. It might have been a young girl parading up and down in her first ball-gown and turning back in gleeful contemplation of her own train. I have no doubt the dear fellow was congratulating himself on his bewitching courting costume.

But now for our onward stroll. A tiny sus-

pension bridge has been swung across this path since we entered it a few moments ago. Some industrious little spider has spun its silken web in that short time. I am always on the watch for a fascinating horror in this realm. I hope some day to come upon the scene so thrillingly portrayed by Alphonse Karr. An Amazon of a spider beckoning to some trembling, insignificant little suitor to approach that she may see if he suits her fancy. Brave indeed is he to respond, for he knows that she will eat him—not merely reject him—if he falls short of her standard!

Over yonder in the spruces and hemlocks the honey-bees are hard at work. They find something very attractive at the sections where the tender, light-green shoots of the new growth meet the dark, firm portions of the old. These bees are no doubt members of communities that have sprung from a colony of waifs. Last summer a swarm coming from some unknown quarter located in one of the squirrel houses which you see high up among the trees. The little, old, weather-beaten tree-top home, with its entire bee population, has been safely lowered from its perch among the branches, and now it stands on a broad, low shelf at the head of five fine patent

hives. Some of the new dwellings are tenanted, while others await inmates.

In early childhood my knowledge of the bee was confined to Dr. Watts's admiring mention of the busy insect, to a hearty appreciation of the luscious sweets sealed in the little waxen cells, and to a painful encounter with an enraged member of a hive on whom I accidentally trod while indulging in the delights of a bare-footed ramble among white clover blossoms. It was not until the time of the transfer of the little squirrel house, with its incongruous inhabitants and its store of sweet treasure, that I gained a little conception of the depth of meaning in the life of a bee.

We are told that these little sisters, the workers, toil night and day, in darkness and in light, during their entire short lives, for the benefit of the generation that is to come, and that they themselves reap merely enough for sustenance; the finest of their gathering being devoted to community interests, and in particular to the interests of the yet unborn or dormant republics. At the time when the sacrifice is required they willingly abandon the beautiful, well-stocked homes and go forth in search of some bare, un-

furnished dwelling, where they will immediately proceed to lay the foundation of a new republic.

I came here the other day with the intention of making a close study of the little creatures, but although the owner of the hives could sit with impunity almost at the door of the little dwellings, an angry delegation greeted even my distant advances, and I retreated hastily and ignominiously before the fierce little insects' wrath. I now take my observations from a somewhat remote point.

The wonderful process known as swarming took place here three or four days ago, and a second exodus is looked for at almost any time. I should be glad to think that this beautiful day is to be for some portion of this little community what Maeterlinck calls a "festival of honey." "The one day of forgetfulness and folly, the only Sunday known to the bees. It would appear to be also the solitary day upon which all eat their fill and revel to their hearts' content in the delights of the treasure themselves have amassed. . . They have left trouble behind and care. They no longer are meddling and fierce, aggressive, suspicious, untamable, angry. On this day man can approach them,

can divide the glittering curtain they form as they fly round and round in songful circles; he can take them up in his hands and gather them as he would a bunch of grapes, for to-day in their gladness, possessing nothing but full of faith in the future, they will submit to everything and injure no one, provided only they be not separated from the queen who bears that future within her." *

But the golden hours of the early morning have been speeding as we talked, and the time is not far distant when shrill whistles and hoarse gongs will arouse the workingman to the knowledge of the fact that day has begun in the great, indispensable world of human labor. Soon streets not far from this quiet grove will resound with the tread of hastily passing feet, and the rushing tide of human travel will have set in. Flowers will bloom as bravely as now, but birds will become comparatively shy and silent; yet every now and then some heart in the great throng less preoccupied or more in tune than others will take note of sweet sounds and fragrant flowers, fresh trees and limpid skies, and will praise God for His beautiful world; but you and

^{*} Maeterlinck, in The Life of the Bee.

I know that these are mere shadows of the revelations one *may* have, and that nature's holy of holies can be entered only while the outer world sleeps.

A June Day Chat

"Soar with the birds, and flutter with the leaf;
Dance with the seeded grass in fringy play;
Sail with the cloud; wave with the dreaming
pine,

And float with nature all the livelong day.

"Call not such hours an idle waste of life;

Land that lies fallow gains a quiet power;

It treasures from the brooding of God's wings

Strength to unfold the future tree and flower.

"So shall it be with thee if, restful still,

Thou rightly studiest in the summer hour;

Like a deep fountain which a brook doth fill,

Thy mind in seeming rest shall gather

power."

MRS. H. B. STOWE.



THIS is summer's zenith. To-day she stands in the full beauty, the perfection of her young womanhood. "With June our cup is full, our hearts are satisfied, there is no more to be desired."

Fulness of joy is also the portion of the little woodland folk. Listen to their merry chatter and happy songs! What activity, what alertness, what superabundance of delight! Kind chance or wondering impulse will lead many of the little forest creatures our way to-day; we need not saunter to find them. So let us rest and watch under these sheltering pines, where the soft breezes will visit us, and the fragrance of honeysuckles and roses will be wafted to us, and all the delights of a perfect June day will be ours.

Over yonder, pressed against an old elm-trunk, I see four young flickers; the children of our ac-

quaintances of the double house perhaps. Is it not wonderful that these little ones, in their apparently perilous position, should be as safe and comfortable as are our human children in their early travels over carpeted floors and level grassy stretches. As in the parent flickers' case, the strong, bracing hind toes and the firmly planted tails form the supports.

There is much uncertain hammering and amateur bark-searching going on among the young-sters, but I fancy that the meal proper will be furnished by the adult pair foraging so industriously among the ant-hills yonder.

Over where the overflow of the bird-bath makes such soft, superior mud, I see a robin gathering material for plastering a nest. Preparations for a second brood, or even a third, perhaps; as many of the youngsters of the first families have already overtaken their parents in size, and broods succeed each other rapidly in robin households.

Judging from the tree-top commotion at twilight, I think yonder thickly wooded portion of the grove must represent a "robin roost;" and to this bird dormitory or "robin academy" the fathers seem to resort nightly with the elder chil-

dren, while the mothers remain on or near the nests with the eggs or young of the previous family.

Some years have elapsed since Mr. Bradford Torrey and Mr. William Brewster drew the attention of bird-observers to the fact that, even during the breeding season, great companies of robins congregate nightly at some given point more or less remote from the nesting-site. Mr. Torrey acknowledges that he at first entertained a suspicion that these birds were adult males shirking nursery responsibilities. Husbands and fathers who "thus unseasonably went off to bed in a crowd, leaving their mates to care for eggs and little ones." But farther investigationshis own and Mr. Brewster's-proved that the individuals who composed the assembly were nearly all young birds, with "a sprinkling of adult males." The latter were evidently the fathers assuming charge of the elder children, in the laudable desire to lighten the mothers' nursery cares and responsibilities.

In a walk through the grove, or during a stroll around the *table d'hôte*, one meets with babies of the furred or feathered tribes at nearly every step nowadays. Parents conduct their children

to my restaurant from the time the little creatures leave the nest, and I have the delight of watching them all through the various stages that lead to complete emancipation. One young robin, easily recognizable by a slight peculiarity of plumage, shows such an obstinate predilection for the table d'hôte as to cause his parents no little anxiety and discomfort. When they first brought him to the restaurant, he was at the age of senseless diving and lunging after twigs and pebbles and other equally indigestible articles, which, human infant-like, he did his best to swallow. Now he is a handsome, well-developed fellow, but a baby still in many respects notwithstanding his size. In spite of his parents' expostulations and entreaties, and in spite of the dutiful example of his brothers and sisters, he often persists in spending entire days at the table d'hôte, and I fancy that his father and mother sometimes regret having ever introduced him to the fascinating quarter. All day long he chatters and coos contentedly to himself, samples goodies, bathes, flits in and out among the brush-heap boughs, makes short tours through the maple-tree branches, and enjoys himself as thoroughly as if he were a model of obedience. Were it not for

the Mexican—the faithful little guardian of the table d'hôte—the fate his parents have no doubt frequently prophesied for him would long ago have overtaken him. He would have made a breakfast for a cat. Let us hope that when the newness of the hostelry charms has, in a measure, worn off, he may be willing to leave this little nook in order to meet the wider experiences necessary for life's preparation.

It was early in May that the first squirrel baby appeared at my table d'hôte. I had been expecting this visit for several days, having thoroughly understood the meaning of the unusual activity around the snug little quarter which represents home to Mr. Rufus and Madame Jolie-Queue, as well as the significance of their wholesale and barefaced appropriation of every available bit of nest-lining material for some time previous to the baby's appearance. As I am in a measure considered responsible for my protégés' depredations, they and I were equally in disgrace during this petty larceny period. But the theft which, in its consequences, was most humiliating and farreaching was the abstraction of a bit of clothesline. The magnitude of the evil was not connected with the intrinsic value of a bit of rope, but

with the fact that in attacking this particular corner in hemp Madame Jolie-Queue severed the connection between a post and a taut line full of spotless linen fresh from the laundry-tubs. There have been strained relations between the laundress and Madame Jolie-Queue since the event.

I have never before witnessed such heroic bringing up, such Spartan training, as that bestowed on her offspring by this little squirrel lady during the one day the baby spent in the table d'hôte neighborhood. Early in the morning I saw her leading the tender, inexperienced little creature to perilous heights among the maples; eminences from which on every occasion he promptly fell to the ground with a thud suggestive of the destruction of his entire internal economy. Over and over I went to the little flattened-out creature, expecting to find him dead; but he never failed to pick himself up as soon as his scattered wits and suspended breath returned. Once or twice he approached me and took refuge in my lap, but at his mother's angry call and chatter he left me and returned to her.

We saw her vigorously training and disciplining the poor baby throughout the entire day, and one of our number insists that on two or three

halting occasions the Spartan mother slapped her child to give him confidence! But as this statement was made by a person who entertains a prejudice against Madame Jolie-Queue, the assertion must be taken with several grains of salt.

When the twilight hour came, I looked out toward the table d'hôte region to see if any needy little creatures were stranded there. Two small figures were barely discernible on the summit of the brush-heap. The larger was evidently remonstrating, urging, and threatening, but the smaller remained unresponsive and impassive. You have already guessed that the forms represented the energetic disciplinarian, Madame Jolie-Queue, and the poor, bruised, exhausted baby. In vain she urged him to mount to the home shelter. In vain she related to him gruesome stories of the wilful little squirrels who, through late staying-out, had become the prey of owls or cats. He was too wretched, too worn out, to care what became of him, and he positively refused to stir from the brush-heap. Why his mother did not pick him up and carry him away in her mouth, cat and squirrel fashion, I cannot understand

As much as possible I pursue the non-interfer-

ence plan in such encounters, feeling assured that generally the little wild creatures need no assistance of mine in the management of their affairs. But in this instance I departed from my usual policy, for darkness was coming on, and the weather had suddenly changed from warm to cold—there were even frosty suggestions in the air-and the baby would certainly perish from one cause or another if left out on the brushheap. But one course remained for me to pursue. I went out to the scene of the disturbance, and, in spite of Madame Jolie-Queue's expostulations, I picked her child up and carried him into the house, where he was admired and caressed and sympathized with, and promised protection from his over-zealous and tyrannical mother.

He manifested no fear, but snuggled down gratefully into my warm hands while a cosey basket was being prepared for him. He fell asleep as soon as deposited in his crèche, and was not even conscious of an important transfer that took place not long after, when I carried him over to the house in the grove, and generously presented him to its inmates. The training he has received from that time to this is the reverse of the Jolie-Queue method, but the present system appears

highly satisfactory to the subject of the experiment. He has developed into a handsome, fascinating tyrant, and is as playful as a kitten, and as much at home on his owners' heads and shoulders as among the trees which he now visits daily; reserving to himself the right to lodge in the grove-house and to enter his own particular part of the establishment as often during the day as the fancy takes him. He makes his entrance and exit through a window in the ivy-covered tower, and during a daylight stroll in that direction one is almost certain to come upon him. Had not the spirit of dreamy summer indolence taken possession of us-that blessed indolence which Dr. Henry Van Dyke classes among the virtues -we might even now set out in search of him; but this is a day on which one feels inclined to abide by one's first choice of a resting-nook under the trees, satisfied with whatever comes within its range. And listen, is it not, as if in gentle expostulation at the very thought of moving, that our sweet little neighbor, the pewee, exclaims: "Leave me-e-e?"

Do you see the friendly squirrel viewing us from the small stump elevation at the foot of those old willows? Fortune is kind to have sent

him this way, for his is the history I would like to relate to you now, it having a close connection with the earlier chronicle.

Although this little squirrel is full grown, he is very young, you see; for his face still has the roundness of contour which characterizes extreme youth among squirrels as well as human beings. I recognize him by his great friendliness, also by a peculiarity of tail, general paucity of covering, with a perfectly barren space and a knot-like twist about midway in the caudal appendage. Now he draws nearer, and you are enabled to observe that his nose is slightly damaged; another distinguishing mark if farther identifying evidences be needed.

Do you hear that loud chattering of squirrels overhead? A violent dispute it seems to be, and you note that our little friend has taken alarm and has fled at the angry sounds. Perhaps he recognizes the voice of a certain shrew among the disputants, and thinks it well to avoid an encounter with its vigorous owner. At any rate he has taken himself to the depths of the stump, and there he will probably remain till the stormy discussion is over.

Three days after I had rescued the first squir-

rel baby, Madame Jolie-Queue made her appearance at the brush-heap with a second infant, the little fellow who has just disappeared in the old stump. As a youngster he was even more unsteady on his feet and more uncertain in his movements than was the earlier debutant. Whether the three days of grace were granted him in consideration of his evident delicacy of constitution, or whether, according to squirrel nursery tactics, babies are launched singly, I cannot say. Perhaps Madame Jolie-Queue connected the kidnapping of Number One with her energetic training, and concluded to modify her bringing-up principles in behalf of the second child. At any rate, at the close of the first day he was able to follow her up to the nest, and I have never seen him in quite so desperate a condition as was his brother on the evening of the rescue.

Yet Baby, as we term the second offspring, has had his days of severe disciplining, of falling from the tree-tops and other heights, and of coming in audible contact with substances even less sympathetic than mother earth. More than once the alarm has gone out that Madame Jolie-Queue had killed her child, and I have several times

picked him up stunned and apparently irremediably flattened out; but he has survived all the accidents that have befallen him in the course of this Spartan training and has graduated from the Jolie-Queue school, somewhat battered in appearance, it is true, but with the lovely, chastened disposition which is the usual compensating portion of those who know how to turn to best advantage a residence with a shrew.

You observe that Rufus does not figure in the account of the nursery campaign; yet he used to appear now and then; but I always saw him on a housetop corner! A post which, during this stormy period, he seemed infinitely to prefer to the comfortable dwelling which sheltered the contentious Madame Jolie-Queue.

Perhaps the hardest lesson the baby had to learn was the art of turning around on a branch, or any other elevated and insecure perch. Many a time, when he was creeping safely and cautiously along a swaying bough, he would lose his balance and topple to the ground at the sudden order, "Right about face."

Early in the course of the training the mother led the little one to the bathing-dishes and taught him how to drink. His first efforts were not

successes; vigorous snortings and sputterings accompanying the performance and testifying to deep sea-soundings instead of surface sips, but he now has to perfection the art of drinking quietly and politely.

About half way up the trunk of the central table d'hôte maple is a convenient hollow where, during summer months, I daily place a small supply of nuts for my squirrel protégés. This hollow is one of many souvenirs of a terrible sleet and wind storm, during which great ice-coated boughs—wrenched from the trees by their own weight, or snapped off like dry twigs by the fierce wind—went crashing to the ground with sounds suggestive of universal destruction.

You may fancy that, on account of being daily provisioned, this storm-hewn hollow is a favorite squirrel lunch-counter; but it has served more than one peaceful purpose lately, for it was the cradle in which Madame Jolie-Queue used to place her baby for his day-naps—his well-earned times of rest between trapeze performances and other strenuous exercises. And while he slept she would station herself, always face outward, on the little ledge in front of the hollow, concealing him so completely that it was only by

compelling her to move that one could get a glimpse of the furry ball in the tree-cradle. As she sat thus—sometimes quietly nibbling nuts, sometimes rapidly rubbing and smoothing her fur from the tip of her rat-like nose to the end of her handsome tail—she always had a severe expression of "don't wake the baby."

I think it is just about two weeks since the youngster bade farewell to his mother and set out in life on his own responsibility. But though he goes no more to nursery haunts, he is nevertheless not shelterless. Such snug quarters as he has found for himself! I am certain that his mother would drive him from them and secure them for herself did she but know of their superior charms and advantages.

It was shortly after he left the paternal roof, during a day of severe wind and heavy rain, that I discovered Baby on our roomy veranda—our bungalow, as we call it. Tables, chairs, and couches had been drawn back from exposed places and packed into a sheltered corner, while the entire collection of veranda rugs and cushions had been heaped upon them; and high and dry on the summit of this structure sat our friend, Baby. The little fellow was looking out complacently

on the dreary, wet world beyond, and was such a picture of cosiness and comfort as I have seldom seen equalled.

I prepared for him a nice little breakfast of nuts, bananas, and sunflower-seeds and placed his tray of supplies on a table beside him; then from behind the slats of the bay-window, near which he was stationed, I watched him as he ate. At the close of the feast, he stowed the remnants in various veranda nooks, then snuggled down into the depths of the rugs and cushions for his nap. What a blissful, luxurious one it must have been.

But this was no solitary experience, I assure you; and as the rainy-day arrangement of the veranda furnishings is also the usual nightly one, I strongly suspect that Baby has frequently adopted these quarters for his sleeping apartments. He is wonderfully fearless, and our presence never seems to interfere either with his comfort or the carrying out of his plans.

No other squirrel visits this delightful nook, but it has a goodly number of patrons among the feathered folk. They seem to entertain a profound admiration, a genuine fondness for people who have the good sense to live out-doors as much as the weather permits, and who even take

their meals in the bungalow on all propitious occasions. Then such benefits as birds reap from the crumb-scattering propensities of human beings—the economical woodland life has no such wasteful counterpart, though, as you may fancy, more scraps fall from our table by design than by accident.

I think it would be impossible for the most inveterate of English-sparrow haters to withstand the friendly charms of a certain little cock-sparrow friend of ours-Monsieur Sans Gêne, he is called—who not only hops around our table and perches fearlessly on our chair-rungs, but who also accompanies us on short walks, and frequently comes to meet us on our return from longer expeditions. When I reappear, after an absence either long or short, he flutters gleefully around my shoulders and is evidently strongly tempted to alight. At times he hovers over the Mexican, and I think he will some day take a ride on her back. It is evident that he and many others among the bird-friends connect both the little dog and myself with food-supplies, as they fly in a body to meet her, even when she appears alone, and they settle down all around her in the unmistakable expectation of receiving bounty

from her. A clever bit of reasoning this; the following out of the recognition that the dog and I are almost inseparable and that provisions appear when we do.

The bungalow is a place of delight all summer long. Before it is the apparently interminable forest, the very heart of the woods. Beside and around it, even outlining its railings-are flowers and plants of the dear, old-fashioned kind, and, tenderly screening the only side of the veranda that looks out toward the world where people pass, honeysuckle vines climb and riot and, during blossom time, almost intoxicate us with their luscious, all-pervading fragrance. From early in the morning, when the grass and flowers sparkle with dew and bird-songs fill the air, until the peaceful hour when the twilight shades fall and the good-nights of the feathered folk are being said or sung, this place has its own peculiar charm.

And when the last day-voice has been stilled are heard sounds that fit in with the coolness and mystery of night. Then the flowers speak a language never heard in sunlit hours, and, flitting in and out among the dark places of the forest or glowing among the lowly grasses appear the

tiny forms of merry fireflies and modest glow-worms.

The bungalow is so situated that it catches every air-current, hence breezes sweep through it almost constantly. To this fact, as well as to its nearness to the woods, we attribute the veranda's unusual immunity from mosquitoes; the little pests always manifesting a preference for regions where the trees grow thickly, or the bushes crowd together. But even in the forest-nook which we have chosen for our resting-place this morning, you note that we are not molested. True there are days-not many of them, however-in which mosquitoes are numerous here, and nights when their sharp voices and sharper stings are peacedisturbing factors, but these are the exceptional times, for this is not a mosquito-infested quarter. There is no stagnant water in which the eggmasses may float comfortably about or the "wrigglers" disport themselves. Even the bird-bath overflow—which has sluggish inclinations—is daily flushed and made to hurry on its way through a carefully constructed pipe.

And now, if hearing of another favorite nook will not tax your patience, I would tell you of a haunt which shares with the bungalow both my

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affections and my patronage. Like the veranda it is a shelter which finds general favor during the season when people break free, as much as possible, from conventional trammels and eschew living in houses; but it is, nevertheless, no mere summer harborage, for its hospitality has been tested in times of rain and storm, and has withstood all but the excessive cold.

I speak of a tiny, Walden-like hut, visible from a point just beyond our present halting-place. It nestles down among the vines and flowers, while protecting maple-boughs droop low over its hospitable doors and caress its humble roof; but from the window at the back one looks out over wide fields and on beyond the river valley till the sky is met by a long line of wooded hillsides.

The hut is far enough removed from any dwelling to impress its frequenters with a delightful sense of remoteness and solitude; yet near enough for protection and a certain amount of sociability. I never enter the quiet little cabin without recalling the words of Mr. Hamilton Gibson anent his delightful and comparatively isolated country studio.

"Solitude? Where under trees and sky shall you find it? The more solitary the recluse and

the more confirmed and grounded his seclusion the wider and more familiar becomes the circle of his social environment, until at length, like a very dryad of old, the birds build and sing in his branches and the 'wee wild beasties' nest in his pockets." *

To the hut come birds and squirrels and cottontails, as well as hosts of other little creatures much more difficult to enumerate than are these well-known everyday folk. Sometimes the guests perch upon the window-sills or halt at the threshold, but the more fearless enter the little dwelling and calmly investigate its furnishings, among which they evidently include both the little doggie and myself.

A house-wren gave away her secret a few days ago by chattering at me from the roof, and from the top of the outward-opening side door of the hut. Her nest is in the cabin's little sham chimney, the summit of which was a favorite halting-place for robins, song-sparrows, cat-birds, thrushes, flickers, and other feathered gentry in former summers, but it is not patronized by them since the wren's appropriation of the snug little box. Birds of all these families, and I cannot

^{*} Mr. W. Hamilton Gibson, in My Studio Neighbors.

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say how many others, nest in the vines and trees around the little hut. Humming-birds come daily to sip sweets from the flowers at the door—the saucy plants send reconnoitring vines and blossoms into the very hut itself wherever aiding and abetting knot-holes can be found—and I frequently hear the little birds' voices during these familiar visits. A not unpleasing, frequently repeated, but very commonplace utterance is all that has come to my notice.

Sometimes, on crisp autumn or early winter days, an oil-stove is lighted in the hut, for the sheer coseyness of a cold-day experience in the snug little dwelling. Children highly approve of such experiments, and I have more than once overheard my little visitors bewailing the fate that compelled them to live in large, comfortable houses instead of dear, little one-roomed huts.

The cabin is a very desirable retreat when unusual quiet is required for evening study or reading. Though standing well back, it is clearly visible from the street, and I have been told by those who have passed it on cold, dark evenings, when the snug little dwelling was occupied and a bright light streaming out through its windows,

that no more cheery influence could be imagined than this unlooked-for bit of brightness in the midst of the surrounding darkness.

Several years ago I learned what the lights of a home may mean to those who view them from a cheerless outer world. It was while we were summering in the beautiful Canadian region where I made the acquaintance of Corny, the friendly crow. On either side of our house, between us and our nearest neighbors, were many wooded acres; back of us were the mountains; before us a long lake stretch, and on the opposite side of the lake more mountains, with only two inhabited dwellings at their base. The house we occupied-standing as it did on an eminencecommanded a wide view, and was visible nearly the entire length of the lake. The window-shutters, great, thick wooden structures, made with a view to resisting possible bear attacks, were at first arbitrarily left open or closed during the evening without a thought of our illumination serving a double purpose. But when we learned what our lights might mean to outsiders, a proclamation went forth to the effect that the shutters were to be left wide open at night until the hour for retiring and extinguishing the lights.

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Later than that country people would hardly be abroad.

"You would never shut us out from your cheery home-lights," said a farmer neighbor on his way to a remote field across the lake, "did you but know what beacons they may be to poor, belated, storm-tossed fellows rowing home in the darkness. And even on fine evenings it does us good to see their pleasant gleam. Indeed, it seems to me that the sight of a home-light can never come amiss."

From that time until, at the approach of winter, we closed the old house and turned our faces cityward, our evening lights were allowed to stream out through the broad windows for the benefit of anyone to whom they might serve as guides or carry a heartening message.

A beautiful ceremony is taking place over yonder in the little open place visible between the tree-trunks. The bumble-bee is performing the marriage-rites of the red clover blossoms. Without his humble ministrations the plant would never come to fruition. A most conclusive proof of this fact is cited by Mr. Hamilton Gibson in "My Studio Neighbors." Many years ago the grangers of Australia determined to introduce

our red clover into their country, and, for this purpose, imported a large quantity of the American seed. A magnificent crop, both of foliage and bloom, was the result, but not a single seed was to be found among the entire blossom yield. This, owing to the fact that the plant was separated from "its inseparable counterpart," the bumble-bee. When the little insect was introduced into Australia "the transplanted clover became reconciled to its habitat, and now flourishes in fruition as well as bloom."

There is an orchard oriole father leading his little one from limb to limb of yonder old elm; gathering leaf-destroying insects or larvæ on his way and dropping them in the youngster's beak, and withal managing to give us delightful little scraps of song in between the feeding and food-capturing periods.

There was a wild storm here two days ago during which an orchard oriole nestling—perhaps the very little one now before us—was torn from the nest and carried beyond grove precincts nearly as far as our veranda. For some days previous to this I had noticed much orchard-oriole activity around a certain cedar-tree not far from here, and I thought it possible that the baby

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might belong in that circle. So I brought him back to the grove, and there, clinging to a low bough of the cedar in question, were two other young orioles; little yellow-breasted, greenishbacked, bright-eved creatures-exact counterparts of the downy ball I had in my hand, and all three were the picture of their mother, who, with the father, was hovering anxiously around the nest site. Now and then the parents flew down to the babies and coaxed them to mount. I placed the foundling on a branch beside the other wrecked nestlings, and then, from a reassuring distance, I watched the old birds as they carefully led the little ones to a higher, safer perching-place; and when all was quiet I withdrew from the scene.

There were tragedies that day—how many we cannot say—and bird-songs were hushed while the wild winds raged and the rain fell in torrents. What an angry face nature can wear even in June! But no sooner was there a little diminution of the fury, a slight promise of better things on the way, than the glad wood voices rang out in a grateful Te Deum and life was thankfully taken up in whatever shape the storm had left it.

I picked up many a broken egg after the tem-

pest had spent itself, and thought sympathetically of the shattered hopes represented by these fragments. But even stormy winds fulfil the Creator's word and nature's balance is kept through tempest as well as calm.

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The noonday lull has already set in. No sound now save the bees' drowsy droning and the soft rustling of wind-swayed leaves. In the wild garden daisies and buttercups are nodding to each other, and soft waves and ripples are playing over the tops of the tall grasses. How caressing, how soothing the fragrance-laden breeze as it fans one's brow and lightly touches one's hair, whispering all the time of beautiful, mystical things to which the heart responds though it but dimly understands.

And now—with a vague consciousness of the bliss of living—we float peacefully, unquestioningly, on with the June-day tide. Whither are we bound?

I think for the blessed port of happy summer dreams.

In the North Country

"Up in a wild, where few men come to look,
There lives and sings a little lonely brook,—
Liveth and singeth in the dreary pines,
Yet creepeth on to where the daylight shines."



It is to a point far removed from the familiar paths through which we have wandered month after month that I would summon you today. For a little while we exchange the grove, the veranda, the hut, and all the dear home-nooks for a sojourn on the banks of a north-country river. Here, in the shadow of the great trees that line the cliff-top, is my favorite outlook point. In flood-time the swollen stream rages by and does its best to wrench the huge bowlders from the encircling grasp of the half-bared roots; but, though the trees resist bravely, the river will win some day, for each year, as the bank recedes before the angry spring torrent, the grasp of the old roots grows weaker and weaker.

Far up on the forest-clad mountain-side the river springs into life. On and on the little stream glides past the haunts of solitude-loving,

human-fearing creatures, ever gaining strength and volume as it advances, until at last, over at the mountain-base yonder, it breaks from forest confines, and, with a triumphant leap, dashes in among the scattered bowlders and hurries along to join the majestic St. Lawrence.

How many phases of its character the stream reveals to us from the time it comes in sight at the forest's border until it loses itself in the great river beyond. Here it rushes merrily along through rocky, hollow stretches, occasionally, at a repulse from a giant bowlder or an encounter with a sharp, projecting stone, curling back in soft, white, glittering foam. Chattering, gurgling, rippling, leaping, laughing as it goes. There, at a sudden shelving of its bed, it glides serenely on, far above the rocks and stones visible in its clear, sandy depths; and the fishes dart playfully in and out among the rocky crevices or lodge in the cool, quiet shelter of the great stones.

On the opposite side is a pebbly beach, where the stream leaps and eddies around the shore. Here the little children come to wade and to sail their tiny ships, and farther down in a shallow

bend is a reedy stretch where the cattle seek immunity from persecuting flies and rest and ruminate in the cool, grateful shade.

But here and there in this same gleeful river we see dark, silent pools with thread-like currents running through their black waters, and suggestions of mystery and treachery and peril even in their quiet.

No boats save the frail barks launched by little children attempt to struggle with the uneven stream before us; but down below, at the meeting of the waters, it grows calmer and clearer, and there the musical dipping of oars may be heard keeping time to the plaintive strains of Canadian boat-songs.

Where the pines and the birches part on beyond you may get a glimpse of the noble St. Lawrence. To-day skies are fair and winds are propitious and the river flows on in its calm majesty, but it is not always thus. There are times when tempest and storm rend its mighty heart and awful darkness broods over its deeps; yet now, as then, it breathes only of things unfathomable, of mysteries inscrutable, and in the names by which the sentinel capes of one of its tributaries are

known, we seem to hear some of its oft-repeated solemn utterances:

Trinity, Eternity. Trinity, Eternity.

We are not the only watchers by the river-side to-day. Over yonder, gazing silently down from a projecting limb into the depths of the stream below, I see a belted kingfisher. Perhaps it was his home that I discovered in the bank a few days ago, not far from where we are seated. I would not investigate the mysteries of the deep entrance for fear of disturbing possible nestlings; yet this was perhaps an unnecessary precaution, as the young halcyons were probably launched some time ago.

Now our silent friend rises; he hovers above the stream. "It needs only the glint of a shining fin or scale just beneath the surface to catch his watchful eye." Now, like a lightning-dart, he drops to the stream, and now, as suddenly, he rises again; but he is silent no longer. With a loud, triumphant rattle he flies away, for in his beak he bears his writhing, glistening prey.

Kingfishers are numerous here and kingbirds are abundant, but I see few of my best beloved among birds—the robins. Whether the whole

family would have been quite so dear to me but for a constant, loving, intimate, five-years' companionship with two of their number I cannot say; but certain it is that with each glimpse of an American redbreast there come to me tender memories of two dear, devoted little robin friends, who not only shared our home shelter and followed me affectionately about through the grove—refusing to accept their daily chance of freedom—but who were also my most sympathetic and harmonious companions during many a stroll in Canadian woods, and whose little bodies now rest in a peaceful northern haunt near which Canadian waters flow.

"Quee-vit, quee-vit," the swallows call as they dip and skim over the river. Perhaps now and then to some discontented little fir-tree, longing to exchange his safe forest-shelter for a place in the great, uneasy world beyond, they tell of the marvellous things they have seen in their journeys over land and sea.

Both earlier and later in the season cedarbirds appear in companies among the tree-tops and down near the docks, where they fly and wheel over the water and dart in and out among the crevices of the wharfs; but at this season the flocks disband and the gentle little waxwings go off in couples, for housekeeping cares engross them in July.

But cedar-birds are not the only feathered folk who are thus tardily constructing their homes and preparing for families. Over in the meadows, among the thistle patches, one sees troops of joyous goldfinches—chardonnerets, as they are called here—busily gathering thistle-down for the linings of their nests. "Few birds seem to enjoy life more than these merry rovers. . . Their flight is expressive of their joyous nature, and as they bound through the air they hum a gay 'perchic-o-ree, per-chic-o-ree.'"*

Alas that bird-trappers should be so successful in this region, and that before one out of every five or six houses in the village, and a larger proportion among the straggling dwellings on the outskirts, one sees poor little prisoners in black and yellow uniforms beating their wings against cage-bars or gazing longingly out toward the blessed stretches where their companions riot and exult in the joys of freedom.

One sees other bird-prisoners before the little houses of the Canadian villagers and habitants.

^{*} Mr. Frank Chapman, in Birds of Eastern North America.

My heart has ached over robins and "topneys" (cedar-birds), over indigo buntings and vespersparrows, grackles and meadow-larks, warblers and vireos, and I cannot say how many other feathered innocents under sentence of imprisonment for life; but the male goldfinches stand to the other prisoners in about the ratio of three to one.

I do not think the custom is permitted nowadays, but years ago captured song-birds were among the commodities trundled over the long, weary miles intervening between the outlying villages and farms and the market-stands in Quebec. With flowers and fruits and vegetables and dairy and poultry-vard products-conspicuous among the latter expostulating fowls tied by the legs in bunches of half a dozen—with straw hats and spruce gum and maple sugar and Indian hay and brilliantly colored home-made toyswith the whole heterogeneous stock of a Canadian market-woman's cart, in short—the poor, terrified little prisoners made the journey to the beautiful city set on a hill. No doubt many of the frightened creatures died before the glittering roofs came in sight, but unfortunately others survived, and if not sold were trundled back to

await death or the terrors of the next market-day.

I know a woman who often looks back with unalloyed gladness to a certain day of her early childhood, a bright, summer morning on which, armed with a generous supply of copper coins, she wended her way to the Fabrique Street Market—a place that lives now only in Quebec's memories.

The coins represented a long abstention from sweets and toys, as for months previous the little girl had been preparing for the season when the captive goldfinches were to appear on the marketstands. A large cage full of the terrified little creatures came into her possession in exchange for the money—not many farthings apiece were they-but no sooner was the transfer made than, to the horror of the vendor and the amazement of the bystanders, the child opened the door of the cage and set the prisoners free. It must have been with a heart as glad and thankful as their own that she watched them as they flew away from the market-place out toward the region of green fields and freedom. Let us hope that their bitter experience taught them wisdom-which, in cases like this, is synonymous with the fear of

man—and that whatever the fate that finally overtook them they never again knew the agonies of imprisonment.

I cannot tell you how often during my strolls through the village and beyond its precincts I am tempted to emulate the kind-hearted little girl's example to the extent, at least, of opening the prison-doors and setting all but the disabled or aged captives free. To buy the trapped birds would only be to encourage the wretched traffic, while to liberate them would perhaps discourage it. I have reasoned and expostulated with the owners of these unfortunate prisoners, doing my best to represent the misery of being compelled to gaze from behind prison-bars upon the joy and happiness of companions in freedom, but all to no purpose. "Croyez-moi, Madame, ils ne sont pas malhereux, ces oiseaux-là," is the not-at-all reassuring assurance I invariably receive.

Speaking of strolls beyond village precincts, I must tell you of a walk I recently took, accompanied by my little Chihuahuan, the guardian of the table d'hôte. We could not think of excluding her from our party when planning for this northern outing; and the joys that are hers in the companionship of her dear ones, to say noth-

ing of certain pleasures peculiar to this region, amply compensate her for all fatigues of travel and the loss of many home comforts. She never strays far from my side, and you may see her now, over in the open beyond the old stump at your right. What her perpetual quest among the grasses may mean I cannot determine. Now and then she finds a wild strawberry; sometimes she goes on a butterfly chase—happily in the latter case the objects of the hunt are always just beyond her reach-but on all these occasions her purpose is evident. I find the puzzle in the careful sniffing of the ground; the slow, cautious following along some intangible line; the sudden pausing, and equally sudden drawing back as if to avoid attack; then the settling down and gazing intently, perhaps for minutes, at an apparently untenanted bit of soil. What does it all mean? Is it a feint? A mere harmless pretence at hunting? Or is she following the course of some underground creature, some invisible dweller in the soil?

I have no doubt that her passing startles many a little denizen of the fields, but I have never known her to harm anything.

But now of the walk of which I have spoken.

It was early one morning of a festival day that the Chihuahuan and I set out for a pilgrimage place distant from our landlady's dwelling about three miles and a half. A friend was waiting to greet me there, and all sorts of pleasant anticipations filled my mind, but for the little doggie the joys of the present were quite sufficient. luck enough to live," she perhaps said to herself as we pursued our way, which led, first through the pleasant village, where friendly faces met us on all sides, and generous hands held out flowers as we passed, and kindly voices wished us Godspeed and a safe return (my expostulations regarding the bird-trapping practices were all too soon forgotten and forgiven, you see), then out on the highway where the houses are few and far apart, and the view of the great river, along whose bordering meadows our route lay, is almost uninterrupted. On our right was a beautiful bank, and down its fresh, green sides many a little rill courses. Now and then we walked in the shadow of wide-spreading single trees, but one rarely finds continued shade along Canadian roadsides; the ruthless axe of the early settlers having felled even the forest patriarchs that would have shielded and protected the highways.

Sometimes there passed us spruce young gallants with their gayly dressed blondes; happy little children in festival attire; sedate, middle-aged men and women, and even a few aged pilgrims. Jaded steeds were urged to best endeavors, and pedestrians stepped with a holiday gait, but at sight of my fairy-like companion all paces slackened and exclamations of wonder and delight greeted her on every side.

But there were long stretches where we saw neither houses nor people, and in the beautiful seclusion of these golden moments nature revealed her very heart. Friendly little vesper-sparrows looked wonderingly at us from rude fence-railings or flew from post to post in advance of us. Goldfinches wended their wavy way through the fields, and a few dear robins wished us good cheer. Once a gay purple finch and his little sparrowy wife came out from the shelter of an elderberry bush, and a warbling vireo sang of a snug, little basket home where his precious babies had lodged, while from a beautiful little indigo bunting's heart welled up a song as full of joy and sunshine as was the glad summer day itself.

But it was about midway in our walk, as I rested on the hillside in the shade of a noble old

elm near the gentlest, most silvery-toned of little brooks, that I felt the culmination of the harmony had been reached. From neighboring thickets came the wood-thrushes' cool, melodious notes and the white-throat's "Swee-et Canada, Canada, Canada."

And with the breath of the summer breeze a musical murmur swept through the corn-fields, the stately grain bowed its beautiful head, and every leaf of our sheltering elm swayed in response to the mysterious influence that comes we know not whence, and departs no one can say whither.

It was partly with a view of prolonging the harmonious hour and partly to secure rest and refreshment for my little companion that I waited thus by the wayside. I parted the moist, drooping grasses that grew beside the brook, and, with my hand for a cup, I dipped from the cool, sparkling depths and gave her to drink. For a little while she lingered near me, sniffing the breeze and gazing out over the meadow stretches, but in a very short time she had taken up her favorite pursuit of searching among the grasses, and to this occupation she devoted herself until we resumed our journey.

What with loitering and lingering—pausing to rest or enjoy or investigate—it was nearly noon of that beautiful day when we approached the pilgrimage place. But, though the sun was high, and its ray beat directly down on us, the heat was not unpleasant. It seldom is in this region of bracing, invigorating, tonic-laden air.

Pilgrims were coming and going, and near each of the quaint, little flower-surrounded homes were groups of villagers discussing the problems of the day as represented by the interests of their simple and primitive little world. An occasional friendly greeting had hitherto been the share of attention I received when passing this way alone or with human companions, but very different was it when my little, four-footed friend was sighted. On entering the village I had picked her up, fearing a bewildering effect for her if she was left to thread her way after me through pilgrim bands and among passing vehicles, but from the safe shelter of my arm she looked out undismayed and with deepest interest on the strange new world before her.

An old man leaning on the fence in front of a cottage overshadowed by poplars was the first of the villagers to spy my little Mexican. Slow-

ness of speech and dulness of hearing hindered him from keeping pace with the animated conversation going on around him, but there are compensations along all lines; his vision was still clear and he had ample opportunity for observation. No doubt many a long day had passed since he had been able to contribute any but the merest of commonplaces to the conversation of the villagers, but his was the prestige of introducing the bewitching little stranger from tropical lands to the circles at the entrance of the pilgrim village.

So engrossed were they in their own particular discussions that they did not notice the old man as he hobbled forward to meet us, and so loud and animated were their tones that they heard neither his eager questions nor my necessarily high-pitched answers.

"Ah, la belle p'tite bête que vous-avez là, madame! Et comment est-ce qu'elle s'appelle donc?"

Unbounded delight on hearing that her name is Fifine. Its selection no doubt appeared to him like a tribute to his entire nation.

"Mais elle est fine pour le sûre," he exclaimed, laying a caressing hand on the soft, little head. "And her age, madame?"

"Two years."

"Bonté, then she will grow no more! Was there ever before such a wonderful little beast. But whence comes she, may I ask?"

"From Mexico."

"Mexico? That is very far away, is it not? Beyond the seas perhaps. Near where the Holy Father dwells, it may be. And she has walked all the way from your village to-day? B'en ça c'est i' créyable. Ces chères p'tites pattes-là. C'est i' créyable!"

Then turning to his friends, who were still engrossed in home matters and pilgrimage interests, he eagerly drew their attention to the little Chihuahuan, and as rapidly as his halting speech would allow made known to them the situation.

"But pepère is old and no longer hears well," said a pleasant-faced young woman, drawing near. "No doubt he has misunderstood madame. It surely is not possible that the little beast has her growth."

The old man's triumphant importance when I corroborated all his statements (with the exception of the one regarding the geographical situation of Mexico) was really delightful to witness. I have no doubt that he has risen in im-

portance in village circles since the day of our meeting, and as time goes on and the story grows in the telling, the "belle p'tite bête" will probably dwindle away to scarcely perceptible dimensions.

Astonishment and admiration increased rather than diminished as we wended our way through the village, and nowhere did my little companion create a greater sensation than in the neighborhood of the booths, where the objets de piété were being displayed. All along the route a shower of admiring exclamations greeted and followed her; the chorus generally consisting of two apostrophes: "Oh, le beau p'tit chien! Ah, la chère p'tite bête!"

It was as the sun sank behind the mountains and the hush of evening was falling on the world that we turned our faces homeward; the friend with whom I had spent the happy day accompanying us as far as the half-way elm. Farther than this I refused to let her go, for she would have to make the return journey alone. As for myself I knew that friends had already set out from the village to meet me, though there were no wayside dangers or alarms to fear.

We stood awhile at the parting of our ways,

my friend and I, and gazed on the glories of earth and sky. Time is forgotten in moments like these, and thoughts wander far into mystical realms; but a sweet, familiar voice led us gently back to things of earth. It was the little brook calling and gurgling from its bed among the grasses: "Good-night, Good-night."

In Nature's open book,
An epic is the sea;
A lyric is the brook.
Lyrics for me.*

You have no doubt speculated more than once regarding the fate of the little people at the far-off table d'hôte. In the absence of their faithful four-footed guardian they are being well protected and the provision supply continues as when we were with them. I hear that the bungalow has its usual frequenters, and circles generally are much as they were when we left.

But in the grove, as here, the beautiful summer is already on the wane. Bird-songs are ceasing, the days are shortening—although almost imperceptibly—and the golden-rod is in bloom. The moon of the falling leaves is not many weeks

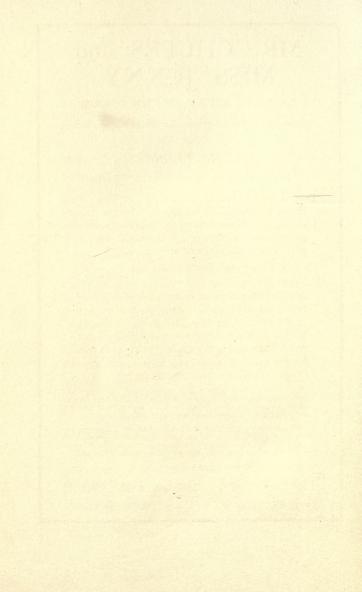
^{*} Frank Dempster Sherman, in Lyrics for the Lute.

distant, and with it we turn our faces toward the dear, familiar haunts of home.

Do you realize that nearly a twelvemonth has elapsed since you and I took our first stroll through the grove together? How rapidly the "mounds of years" heap themselves up! How quickly the cycles pass! Oh, for unlimited leisure, for unbounded opportunities for investigation, and the vision that penetrates to the heart of the mysteries by which we are surrounded.

Look again, where the pines and the birches part, at the majestic river wending its way to the sea. Is it not as if with a promise of final harmony and infinite opportunities for the fulfilment of heaven-born desires that it murmurs as it flows:

Trinity, Eternity. Trinity, Eternity?



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